

# CJR

COLUMBIA  
JOURNALISM  
REVIEW

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2006  
\$4.95/CANADA \$5.95

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## A WAY OUT?

How Newspapers Might  
Escape Wall Street and  
Redeem Their Future

*Douglas McCollam*

HOW TO KEEP  
THE IRAQ DEBATE  
HONEST

*The Editors*

MIAMI NOIR: A TALE  
OF TWO CITIES  
AND THE DAY  
THEY COLLIDED

*Tom Austin*

ON WRITING,  
RISK, AND THE  
ROLLING STONES

*Ted Conover*

WHAT DAVID HOROWITZ  
DOESN'T KNOW  
ABOUT J-SCHOOL

*Nicholas Lemann*





\*2005 Center for Automotive Research study. Includes direct, dealer and supplier employees, and jobs created through their spending.

\*\*Toyota vehicles and components are built using many U.S. sourced parts. ©2005



Toyota U.S. Operations  
Total Jobs.....386,000\*  
Total Investment.....\$13 B

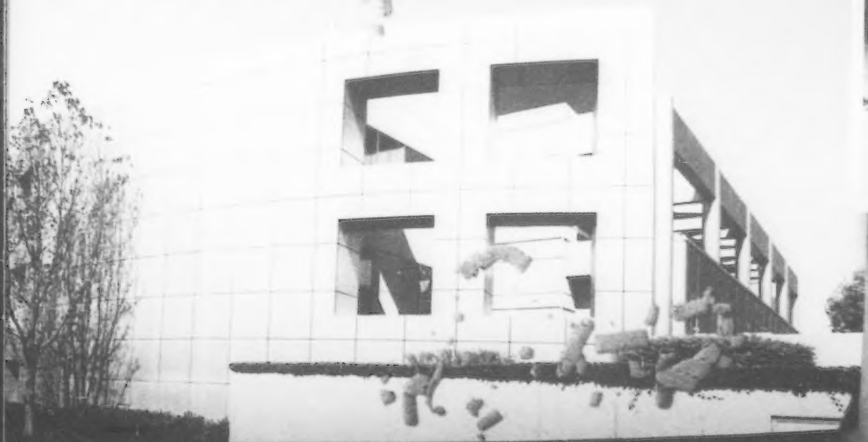
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## OPENING SHOT



LAURENCE KESTERSON/PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

### The Inefficient

**R**egional newspapers across the country were diminished last year as Wall Street demanded layoffs to improve the bottom line. To thrive in an uncertain future, newspapers need the space to be creative, investment to figure out the Web, and support for the inherently inefficient work — talking to people, digging out secrets, noticing nuance — that produces journalism that can stand out from media wallpaper. But publicly owned newspapers are trapped in exactly the wrong economic system for any of that. In our cover story, “A Way Out?”, Douglas McCollam suggests that it may be time to slip the Street’s short-term shackles and test the private equity waters. The inefficiency of real journalism, meanwhile, is at the heart of Robert D. Kaplan’s essay, “Cultivating Loneliness,” which urges hurried reporters to lose the pack and gain a sense of place. Two other pieces look ahead: Timothy M. Phelps weighs his experience in the Valerie Plame affair against a similar entanglement during the Anita Hill story, and sounds a warning. Kiera Butler notes a startling decline of high school journalism programs, especially for poor kids, and identifies some potential solutions. Enjoy. **CJR**

On September 20, Joe Natoli, publisher of Philadelphia Newspapers Inc., announces a plan to cut 100 jobs from the *Daily News* and the *Inquirer*.





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— From the founding editorial, 1961

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COVER: TERESA SDRALEVICH

*"The private press baron of the past might have been a blowhard propagandist with the ethics of a wharf rat, but at least he loved the trade."*

— Douglas McCollam, p. 21

## LETTERS

## A TOXIC QUESTION

Congratulations on having the courage to research, write, and publish "Drug Test" (CJR, November/December). As you noted, the possibility of a link between thimerosal and autism is a complex high-stakes issue, and most journalists either don't want to go near it or do so in a manner that is unbalanced and fails to serve the public's interests. The issues here have global implications far beyond concerns related to autism, and are in desperate need of a thorough evaluation by our nation's best investigative journalists.

I am neither pro-vaccine nor anti-vaccine. I am a health policy analyst with a public health background. I previously worked as a nurse who vaccinated many children and provided care to infants who died of vaccine-preventable diseases. I am also the mother of an eight-year-old boy who has been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder and I have been presented with laboratory data suggesting that he responded to his childhood vaccines in an abnormal manner. I have learned a lot and have seen a side to our health care system that I didn't know existed.

The fundamentalists on both sides of the vaccination issue really scare me and they should scare us all. Both groups have the ability and potential to do great damage. We need some type of a Vaccine Peace Project.

Vicky Debold  
Oakton, Virginia

Thank you for Daniel Schulman's article, "Drug Test." I am the father of a six-year-old autistic girl. I am also the husband of a physician who has been working tirelessly for the last four years to learn everything she can about the physiology of autism, of course hoping to help our daughter. My wife is an intelligent and sensible woman who be-



lieves that thimerosal, administered via childhood vaccines, has caused autism in a genetically susceptible group of children. Like many parents of autistic children, I was stunned to hear the Institute of Medicine's conclusion that not only are they convinced that there is no link between autism and mercury, but that the discussion should end immediately. It seems to me that the discussion has never begun.

Since the thimerosal/autism question first arose, the response has been "No." There never was an honest "Is this possible?" or even an "I don't think this is likely, but let's construct an experiment and find out." There has also never been an "It's not the thimerosal, but we must find out what it is — and quickly." The entire business has had a disagreeable smell from the beginning.

I know that this has been a difficulty for the press; it comes as close as anything to a question which can't be asked. Unfortunately, the national vaccine program has lost a great deal of credibility by offering no answers.

NAME WITHHELD

*Editor's note: The writer and his wife requested anonymity because of fears that her views on thimerosal and autism might have repercussions on her job and medical license.*

I want to compliment your coverage of the thimerosal debate and its bringing to light of how emotional this story is and often how one-sided. The piece might also have mentioned the May 2003 congressional hearings on mercury in vaccines that is public record. I believe it is that record and the growing body of evidence that is driving states in banning thimerosal-containing vaccines. Six states have bans and thirteen are considering bans.

Theresa K. Wrangham  
President

Autism Society of Boulder County  
Boulder, Colorado

Daniel Schulman is absolutely right when he concludes in "Drug Test" that it is "too soon for the press to shut the door on the debate" about whether increased exposure to mercury via thimerosal in vaccines has contributed to the dramatic increase in autism and other neurological disorders among children born in the 1990s.

I spent several months researching the subject for my article "Toxic Tipping Point," which was published by *Mother Jones* in March 2004, and I found that there is indeed mounting scientific evidence indicating that thimerosal may have played a significant role in the otherwise unexplained recent surge in autism and related neurological disorders. But such studies generally are given short shrift in media coverage. With the notable exceptions of a few tenacious reporters such as Myron Levin and Dan Olmsted, most mainstream journalists simply present the views of federal health officials (who certainly have their own conflicts of interest on this issue) as the final word on the thimerosal debate and characterize those who challenge the establishment position as hysterical or incompetent.

As journalists, we owe readers a clear-eyed look at the science on both sides of this thorny issue.

Andrea Rock  
Senior editor  
*Consumer Reports*  
Yonkers, New York

Maybe if Packer had forced himself to listen to such people, he would deserve to be called a "deep diver." On the basis of Glenn's profile, he doesn't.

Barbara Ryan  
Denver, Colorado

## SHALLOW WATERS?

Re: "Deep Divers: Writers Who Make Sense of the Wide World" (CJR, September/October). The first book featured is *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* by George Packer. In his author profile, David Glenn writes that the early chapters, "which chronicle the intellectual prehistory of the Iraq war and the Bush administration's catastrophic failure to plan its aftermath, are long catalogues of Pollyannaish hopes . . ." In conversation, Packer does not exempt himself

## HIT OR MISS

Morton Mintz's essay, "Hair-Trigger Nukes" (CJR, November/December) certainly covers an issue of concern. However, he injects an important error when he suggests that the U.S. strategic nuclear deterrent force is part of the "National Missile Defense" system. The U.S. missile defense program in development involves strictly defensive systems to intercept and destroy ballistic missile warheads before they can strike their targets, using no explosives, and certainly no nuclear weapons. A

As journalists, we owe readers a clear-eyed look at the science on both sides of this thorny issue.

from the indictment. "I was just ignorant, as almost everyone was ignorant, about what we were getting into," he says.

"Almost everyone"? What a dishonest, sloppy phrase. Who was Packer's "everyone"? Surely not the vast numbers of people around the world who demonstrated against the U.S. invasion before it was launched. Surely not seasoned Middle East experts and State Department veterans like the Columbia professor Gary Sick, who held a Columbia alumni seminar in Washington, D.C., spellbound as he predicted what was to come, months before it happened.

To Glenn's credit, he writes that "it is startling that the only antiwar figure who appears even briefly in *The Assassins' Gate* is Eli Pariser, a MoveOn organizer . . . Packer's frustration with such people — his dislike of having conversations with them — apparently extends from his private life to the book itself."

warhead is destroyed using only the force from a direct collision with the interceptor missile, called "hit to kill" technology.

Rick Lehner  
Communications director  
U.S. Missile Defense Agency  
Washington, D.C.

## LOVING LIEBLING

Re: Evan Cornog's piece on A.J. Liebling (CJR, November/December). What a treat! I happen to have a well-worn copy of *The Earl of Louisiana* in my home library, along with *The Press*, *The Jollity Building*, and *The Most of A.J. Liebling*. They're a small part of a wall of books in my family room, most of which come and go. Liebling stays. Whenever I need a quick literary fix, he comes to the rescue, turning wonderful phrases as I turn pages.

Bob Lazich  
Burlingame, California

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Graduate School of Journalism  
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COLUMBIA JOURNALISM REVIEW  
Journalism Building, 2950 Broadway  
Columbia University, New York, N.Y. 10027  
ON THE WEB:  
[www.cjr.org](http://www.cjr.org), [www.cjrdaily.org](http://www.cjrdaily.org)  
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Columbia Journalism Review (USPS 0804-780) (ISSN 0010-194X) is published bimonthly. Volume XLIV, Number 5 January/February 2006. Copyright © 2006 Columbia University. Subscription rates: one year \$27.95; two years \$41.95. Periodical postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing office.

Postmaster: send Form 3579 to Columbia Journalism Review, P.O. Box 578, Mt Morris, IL 61054.

## EDITORIAL

## DRILLING DOWN

How the press can keep the Iraq debate honest

**M**uch like the "debate" that took place in this country before we went to war in Iraq, the current discussion of when and how to get out is being framed by the very people — politicians, government officials, and military brass — who have everything to gain by keeping the debate narrow and the terms black and white and spinnable. The mainstream media, as they did before the war began, are facilitating this oversimplification by letting official sources on all sides of the issue dominate the daily news. As a result, the frame that most people have for thinking about what America does next in Iraq is simply to stay or go, while the question of military disengagement demands deeper thinking.

Beneath the various assertions about exit plans — from President Bush's notion of leaving once "victory" has been achieved to Senator John McCain's plea for more troops to Representative John Murtha's call for a speedy pullout — there is a range of assumptions and questions that desperately need to be tested and explored, their nuances and vagaries clarified. What is the nature of Iraqis' tribal loyalties, and will they — much as religious differences did in the former Yugoslavia — make a unified Iraq impossible? If some form of democracy is possible, what are the best ideas for how to phase it in, and what case studies elsewhere in the world — East Asia, for example, or South Africa — offer the most useful lessons? How does the presence of oil help and hinder economic development? Perhaps most importantly, what is the range of realistic outcomes in Iraq, short of the delusional notion of a Western-style, free-market democracy, that the American people should be prepared to accept?

Much of the information and expertise necessary to tease out these and other questions will not be found anywhere near the White House, or Congress for that matter. It resides in places

where too few journalists are habituated to look: in the military- and security-related research institutes housed at universities, in think tanks, and within the military itself.

Consider a single example: the report published last October by the Strategic Studies Institute at the Army War College, entitled "Precedents, Variables, and Options in Planning a U.S. Military Disengagement Strategy from Iraq." The title is clunky, but the sixty-seven-page report is a detailed and sobering exploration of everything from the question of how to achieve political stability in Iraq to the plausible ways to define victory there. The authors explain the historically problematic process of carrying out an exit strategy following military intervention, the dismal record of international attempts to impose democracy, and the difficulty of measuring the political legitimacy of a new government. They conclude that while it remains possible for the U.S. to devise an exit strategy that leaves both



the U.S. and Iraq better off than before the invasion, "remarkably little room exists for error, ideological dogmatism, or ignorance about the nature of the multiple problems associated with such an undertaking."

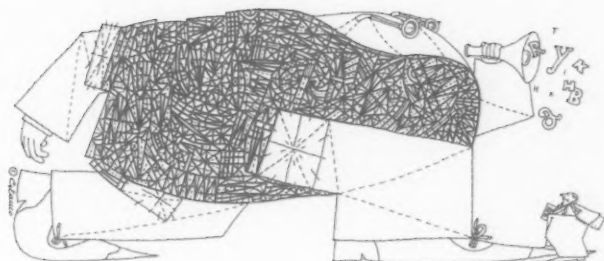
It is a rich trove to mine for story ideas, yet we have found no references to the report in the mainstream press, lending even more resonance to the charge, made in its foreword, that the issue of an exit strategy "has been oversimplified in many of the current media debates. Often, political commentators of various stripes reduce complex arguments and multidimensional planning problems to simple slogans suggesting that victory is either inevitable or impossible."

After nearly three years of happy talk about Iraq, the Bush administration can't be trusted to present the complicated truth, and Congress can't be trusted to make sure that it does. By drilling beneath the rhetoric on Iraq, journalism has a chance to deliver a true public service. **OK**

MARK GOTTLAUM



## VOICES



GAUCIO DELLA SCIUCCA

BY LEAH NELSON

## AN UNLIKELY EDUCATION

## Learning to report in a mental hospital

**T**he best way to survive in a mental hospital is to pretend you are a journalist. Films like *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* would have you believe that your best bet is to get involved with the other patients and, through their pain or craziness, discover your own strength. That is false. In the extreme atmosphere of a psychiatric hospital, it is easy to absorb your fellow patients' problems. Maintaining a degree of aloofness is the only way to avoid losing yourself in others' lives.

As a journalist, I have a responsibility to show the world as it is, not as it ought to be — to explore and explain, rather than fix the problems about which I write. In practice, of course, that notion is imperfect. But in a mental institution, a journalist who is also a patient is constrained by the reality of her position as much as the ideals of her vocation. It is impossible to take responsibility for the well-being of others when one is not considered well enough to be responsible for oneself.

From January to September 2001, I lived at the Austen Riggs Center in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. After finishing two years of college, I was dealing with the onset of bipolar disorder, and my parents decided that I needed a more intensive form of therapy than would be possible on an outpatient basis. I was unhappy at

the thought of going away, but willing to attempt the experiment.

Austen Riggs is among the last of a dying breed of psychiatric facilities: an open-campus setting where the philosophy, boiled down, is that any interaction can be therapeutic if valued as such by its participants. Patients are encouraged to reflect on one another's behavior, and to criticize one another and the Riggs community at large. Some patients relish this constant give-and-take of amateur analysis. I hated it. Every comment from a fellow patient, well intended or not, felt like an intrusion. So in my spare time, I read.

I could not, however, always avoid interaction. I suspected that it would be easier for me to maintain my sense of self at Riggs by treating that interaction with other patients impersonally, as if I were there to find out about them rather than because I was one of them. The idea of pretending to be a journalist came naturally. In high school, working on the newspaper had been my only release during otherwise boring, unhappy school days.

For three months in the middle of my stay I lived in a five-occupant house with David (not his real name). The house was less restrictive than the program I had originally entered, and was supposed to be part of the process of "moving on." David had lived there for seven years. A thirty-five-year-old schizophrenic, he was an embarrassment to his wealthy family, which was paying many thousands of dollars each year to keep him out of the way. When I first moved into the house, David wasn't speaking to anyone. My second night there, I caught him off

guard and he returned my greeting, then asked that I not mention the slip to anyone. He was sitting two feet away from the television watching an old surfing movie, and I decided to learn about him. The emerging journalist in me was curious: If I pushed him, where would he go?

In addition to his illness but not, I came to believe, exclusively because of it, David was an all-around eccentric. He was officially diagnosed as a paranoid schizophrenic, but this did not dictate his grim wit or his intellectual curiosity. In "real life," had he not been shackled with the humiliation of spending years as a mental patient, he might have been the quieter sort of reference librarian, the kind of person who can answer any question or point you to a book that can. Aside from sitting so close to the TV at all hours of the night, David always wore neatly creased pants, a shirt with a collar, and shined

### **I came to understand the sustaining quality of the journalist's duty to observe, and to remember.**

black oxfords. His contributions to the grocery list never varied: Van der Kamp's fish sticks and a particular brand of pickled herring that escapes me now. He would not explain the specificity of his cravings, and would accept no substitutes.

After that night when I caught him off guard, it took a long time for David to talk to me, and it would be inaccurate to say that he ever really opened up. He seemed to have remembered everything he'd ever read, and I had to literally study in order to insert myself into his world. I would conspicuously read in his presence, waiting for him to comment on my book. I would ask him questions about the movies he was watching. The key was to seem curious, but not in a way that he might interpret as either intrusive or gratuitous. He had no interest in small talk.

When interviewing people now — particularly old men who sometimes act as though they have talked to enough people in their lives — I am reminded of David. The skills I developed through my conversations with him are proving invaluable in my work as a reporter. I learned, for instance, how to anticipate that moment, just before it becomes irreversible, when a subject feels invaded. I learned to steer without leading — to allow words to flow according to his desires without letting go of my side of the conversation. David's answers to questions could become lectures, but if properly guided he could be sur-

prised into revealing more personal information. He told me, for instance, that he hated Riggs, hadn't attended therapy in four years, and never intended to go again.

One day, he told me he had found an assisted-living community in Northampton, Massachusetts, that was willing to take him. He planned to go there and get a job, to achieve some level of independence. I don't know whom else he told, but about four days later David disappeared in the middle of the night. His drawers were empty and he was gone.

After he left, I learned another of David's secrets: what had landed him at Riggs to begin with was his decision, a decade before, to expose himself to some children at a playground. I had spent many nights alone in the house with my door unlocked, with David downstairs watching old movies. I had always been comforted by his presence; it was nice to have another person, however odd, around on the empty weekends. I wasn't especially surprised when I learned what he had done, as it had always seemed to me that he was hiding something. What surprised me, and still does, is that my opinion of him didn't change. There had always been this cultivated sense of detachment to our relationship, and the absence of fear and disgust, I think, was a side effect of the fact that I saw him as the subject of a protracted interview. As a journalist, fear and disgust were irrelevant to my relationship with David. Maybe that is because it is hard to hate the subject of a successful interview. No matter how much you might dislike what someone has done, the interview process engenders a certain camaraderie that's impossible to deny. So even after learning about David's past, I was still attached to him through the shared experience of the interview and could no longer judge him as I might have a stranger.

I would like to say that, at Riggs, I learned a lot about the human condition. The truth is that I learned a lot about a few specific people. Generalizations and assumptions, I discovered later, are traps for the journalist interested in true understanding. My time as a journalist and a patient forced an appreciation of every individual's distinct nature. At Austen Riggs, I came to value and understand the sustaining quality of the journalist's duty to observe, and to remember. My decision to pursue journalism professionally is based in no small part on my experience there. I will never return. But I will never forget. ■

*Leah Nelson is a student at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism.*

BY JOEL SIMON

## OF HATE AND GENOCIDE

In Africa, exploiting the past

**D**uring the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, media outlets linked to the Hutu-backed government helped lay the groundwork for the slaughter of Tutsis by routinely vilifying them. One radio station, Radio Télévision Libre de Mille Collines (RTLM), went so far as to identify targets for the Hutu militias that carried out most of the killing. In December 2003, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda convicted three Rwandan media executives — two from RTLM and one from a newspaper called *Kangura* — for their role in the genocide.

The convictions represented a small measure of justice for the victims of the Rwandan genocide, but they were not necessarily good news for journalists in Africa. Many governments there have exploited the perception that the violence in Rwanda was fueled by the media to impose legal restrictions on the press in their own countries. The practice of casting the suppression of critical media as a legitimate effort to fight hate speech and incitement is now distressingly common, so much so that it has become a major impediment to independent journalism in many countries in Africa. In fact, the misuse of hate-speech laws by repressive African governments may well be a greater threat right now than hate speech itself.

Since 2002, the Committee to Protect Journalists has documented nearly fifty such cases in at least a half-dozen countries. In Chad, for instance, four journalists were recently sentenced to jail terms ranging from three months to three years on incitement charges (they were later released). All four journalists had criticized the government and one had reported on an alleged massacre. In Rwanda, public incitement to "divisionism" is a crime punishable by up to five years in prison, heavy fines, or both. The current Tutsi-led regime, which consolidated power in the 2003 election, has increasingly used allegations of ethnic "divisionism" to silence critics, including those in the press.

**A**ll of this is not to deny that hate media and incitement are significant concerns in much of Africa. Rather, the problem is that the concern about hate speech expressed by

many African governments is disingenuous. After all, instances in which legal means have been used to suppress actual hate speech or incitement are rare. CPJ's Africa program, which monitors press conditions throughout the continent, has documented only a handful of examples in the last several years in which speech that could legitimately be classified as incitement was suppressed.

Moreover, where hate speech and incitement thrive, they are generally linked to governments, political parties, and civilian militias. In the case of RTLM, the ostensibly private station was tied to the government of President Juvénal Habyarimana through a web of investors. Several RTLM financial backers and board members were close to the Habyarimana regime and the interim government that presided over the genocide, which killed an estimated 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

In convicting the three defendants in the so-called media trial, the Rwanda tribunal seems to have conflated incitement to genocide with incitement to hatred, a practice that while odious is not a crime under international law. And the tribunal went further, noting that the media paved the way for the genocide in Rwanda by "whipping the Hutu population into a killing frenzy." While RTLM certainly broadcast hate-filled messages, the genocidal violence was not a spontaneous reaction to its programming. The media were only one component in a coordinated government campaign that included arming civilians, mobilizing the population, and organizing militias.

No one doubts that the defendants in the media trial were guilty of terrible crimes. But Diane F. Orentlicher, a professor of international law at American University, is concerned that the judgment's expansive legal reasoning could threaten press freedom. Orentlicher, along with the noted First Amendment attorney Floyd Abrams, plans to ask the appeals chamber of the Rwanda tribunal to refine the legal reasoning regarding incitement that led to the convictions.

Indeed, without clearly articulated international standards on incitement, many African governments will continue to exploit the perceived correlation between hate speech and genocide to stifle legitimate criticism and suppress independent reporting. ■

*Joel Simon is the deputy director of the Committee to Protect Journalists.*

## DARTS & LAURELS



**DART** to NBC, for a landslide vote for fiction over fact. With the amorously pale line between news and entertainment growing fainter by the hour, the network presented, on its imaginary White House drama *West Wing*, an imaginary debate between imaginary presidential candidates moderated by the real-live veteran newsman Forrest Sawyer and carrying throughout, in the lower right-hand corner of the TV screen, the authoritative logo of NBC News. The episode was but the logical, if surreally absurd, extension of the trend to enlist the news media in the cause of artistic verisimilitude, a trend that in the not-too-distant past led some media critics (including this

one) to question the participation of, for example, the MSNBC newsroom in a Hollywood space-disaster thriller. Later in that same November sweeps month, NBC again confounded reality in its coverage of the annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. While other outlets were reporting on a significant accident — the 515-pound M&M balloon had become entangled in a light pole that crashed into the crowd and sent two injured spectators away in an ambulance — the happy chatter of Katie, Matt, and Al continued on unspooled as producers silently substituted footage of the same balloon from last year's parade. Another victory for illusion over truth, entertainment over news.

**LAUREL** to the Toledo *Blade*, for exposing an unholy alliance. Suppose that while running a diocese in northwest Ohio you learned of complaints that one of the priests was raping a choir boy: Who you gonna call? For years, unfortunately, the answer was, You call the cops, and then the problem disappears — no police report filed, no inquiry conducted, the perpetrator transferred to a distant parish, free with an unblotted record to prey again. Such are the dispiriting findings of a three-month investigation into the newly emerging issue of the role of civil authorities in the too-familiar scandal of pedophile priests. Based on a review of thousands of documents and dozens of interviews, the report describes what had been for decades an entrenched culture in the law-enforcement community — a culture in which, when conflicting loyalties to church and state were put to the test, allegiance to the church prevailed. Even now, the *Blade* reports, the slowness of some prosecutors and children's agencies in responding to such complaints points to the lingering legacy of a long-gone police chief whose unwritten rule had instilled the fear of God (and of being fired) in those who would even think of arresting a priest. The *Blade*'s report was riveting and timely, appearing during negotiations on a controversial bill that would extend the statute of limitations on child sex abuse cases beyond the current two years.

**LAUREL** to *The Record*, in Bergen County, New Jersey, for putting the journalistic rubber to the environmental road. In a massive, five-part series eight months in the making, the *Record* exhaustively explored the "Toxic Legacy" bequeathed to the region by the Ford Motor Company when it closed its huge assembly plant in Mahwah a quarter century ago. From the team's own commissioned testing of the astonishing quantity of poisonous paint sludge indiscriminately dumped by the automaker into rivers and streams and near mountains and farms, to its house-to-house interviews in poor communities where children play in the colorful sludge — and where rare and fatal sicknesses are all too common; from the company's complicit deals with the "waste management" industry run by the mob, to its noncompliance with EPA rules and the failure of that agency to enforce them; from internal documents showing that Ford was aware for decades of the hazards, to its malevolent gift of tainted land to the state for a public park — with all this and more, it took only a few days before officials were rewiring up to fix the unconscionable mess. Unknowable at present, of course, in terms of drinkable water, is just what having had Ford in its past may mean to the public's future.

**LAUREL** to National Public Radio, for drafting the military into action. Despite repeated efforts by news organizations to secure for the hundreds of journalists covering Iraq safer passage to the Green Zone — getting to the checkpoint for that official place of business for briefings, parliamentary activities, and the trial of Saddam Hussein requires a long, unshielded trek that constantly exposes them to gunfire, abduction, and other deadly assaults — the U.S. military would not be moved. That is, not until October 19, when NPR's David Folkenflik confronted officers at the Green Zone press center with a copy of an internal e-mail that seemed to suggest that the virtual protection of their p.r. image was a higher priority than the actual protection of journalists' lives. "I suspect it's only a matter of time before someone bags a reporter and gains unwanted public attention," ran the chillingly callous message. "We need to find . . . the magic words to answer the press when they ask publicly why we're shooting at the media." Within hours of Folkenflik's interviews, things got busy in Baghdad. "Early this morning," Folkenflik was able to report, "workers set up tall concrete barriers to protect a new dropoff point for journalists — and to shield their path better as they walked toward the checkpoint for the Green Zone." Memo to the Pentagon: those are the magic words!

*Darts & Laurels is written by Gloria Cooper, CJR's deputy executive editor, to whom nominations should be addressed: 212-854-1887; gc15@columbia.edu.*



## STATE OF THE ART

### DEAR DRUG DEALERS, . . .

**W**ithin four hours: Three shootings, two fatal, drug-related as usual. It was a particularly deadly stretch, even for Baltimore, one of the most dangerous cities in the nation, where more than 6 percent of the population is hooked on drugs and the narcotics trade flourishes in slums that are sometimes called "the other Baltimore." Meanwhile, the FBI had just reported that violent crime in the city had increased for the first time since 1999. For Dan Rodricks, a veteran columnist for the Baltimore *Sun*, covering homicides, drugs, and turf wars was nothing new, though the shootings, combined with the knowledge that the city seemed only to be slipping deeper into a morass of violence, left him unsettled and angry. "You feel like grabbing somebody and shaking them," he said recently. "Can you stop this please?"

As he sat down to write his column for the following day's paper on a Wednesday in early June, he had a thought that, even at the time, seemed absurd. Perhaps he could appeal directly to the dealers to curb the violence. Maybe some would listen. "Dear Baltimore drug dealers," he began, "I promise this will be the most ridiculous thing you've ever heard. Here goes: How about taking the summer off to see what it might be like around here without all the shooting and killing? Serious. How about a cease-fire? A little break could save lives, maybe even your own." He included his phone number in the column and offered to set dealers up with part-time work if they were looking to ease out of "the life." The column drew its fair share of critics, among them a local talk-radio host. Rodricks was practicing kumbaya journalism, some said. Dealers don't want a nine-to-five; besides, they don't even read the paper.

The first call arrived at 4:30 a.m. on the day the column was published, and Rodricks would receive many more in the days, weeks, and months that followed. Indeed, his phone has not stopped ringing since. Most of the callers are men in their late twenties to mid-forties. They are dealers and addicts, some are both. Most have done time. All want out of the game, but don't know where to turn. So they turn to Dan Rodricks.

To date, Rodricks has received more than 600 calls, not to mention those from worried mothers and grandmothers seeking help for their children and grandchildren. On an average day, he gets between ten and fifteen calls, though he has received as many as fifty. "I'm calling about your jobs program," one recent caller told Rodricks. Recalling this conversation, Rodricks chuckled, because, after all, he's a columnist, not an out-

reach worker. And he's not running a "program" per se. Or is he? Lately, it's certainly been getting harder to find the time to write his column, he acknowledged.

Rodricks, who's fifty-one and has been a *Sun* columnist for the past twenty-six years, has no experience to speak of when it comes to job placement or drug treatment, the primary needs of his callers. As his original plea snowballed into a local phenomenon, the columnist initially thought to himself, "What do I do now?" As it turned out, he and his callers would help each other. They tell Rodricks their stories, which often become fodder for his columns, and he, in turn, links them to job and treatment programs. One of these programs, Supporting Ex-Offenders in Employment Training and Transitional Services, run by Goodwill Industries, has received nearly a



hundred referrals from Rodricks. Of those, twenty-five are now employed and thirty others have enrolled in the program.

If anything, this exercise in public-service journalism has awakened Rodricks to a problem that is far more complicated than he realized. Exiting the drug life, after all, is more difficult than anyone might think. For one, employers are reluctant to hire ex-offenders, and since many firms now run background checks, there's no outrunning the past. He has also found the infrastructure that's in place to help addicts insufficient. The wait for an open slot in a treatment program, for instance, can last days or weeks, during which time some addicts backslide or simply change their minds.

For *Sun* readers, Rodricks's work may dislodge some misconceptions about the people who live and deal on the streets of "the other Baltimore." "The stereotype is that a lot of the people that live in these neighborhoods are lazy and don't want to work," said Mike Adams, the *Sun's* assistant city editor. Rodricks has also cut to the heart of an epidemic of drug-related violence that the paper has covered episodically — "a murder here, an act of violence there, a court case here," Adams said. "He's put a face on a deep problem in this city and other cities as well."

Friends have asked Rodricks when he'll drop the crusade and focus on other things. Perhaps he'll continue through the end of the year, perhaps longer, he said. "I don't know when to stop because the phone keeps ringing, and I've heard so many interesting stories. It's kind of irresistible because you don't know where the next phone call's going to lead."

— Daniel Schulman

JED KIRSCHBAUM/BALTIMORE SUN STAFF

## CURRENTS

## MEDIA 2005: HIGHLIGHTS OF THE LOW POINTS

*All told, the press had much to be proud of in 2005. From Plamegate to Colingate, and from the Big Easy to the Beltway, journalists uncovered scandals large and small, and held public officials to account with a vigor seldom seen since 9/11. Of course, the year was not without its low points, which CJR recognizes here in its second annual year-end review of the moments some would rather forget.*

## BIGGEST LIBERAL MEDIA FANTASY

Fitzgerald indicts Cheney. (Sure. And have you heard, Bush is back on the saucer!)



## BIGGEST CONSERVATIVE MEDIA FANTASY

Everyone had the same pre-war intelligence on Iraq. (Right, and the Veep just has a thing for the baked chicken at the Langley cafeteria.)

## META-META AWARD

Mark Felt's daughter's publicist/lawyer, John D. O'Connor, outs Felt as Deep Throat in *Vanity Fair*, where Carl Bernstein is a contributing editor.

## BEST ON-AIR UPRISING

Shepard Smith, reporting for Fox News on how New Orleans's left-for-dead were not allowed to cross a bridge out of town, hears Sean Hannity say from the news studio that the situation needs "perspective." Smith snaps, "This is the perspective!"

## THE 'ASS OUT OF YOU AND ME' AWARD

Mitch Albom. The columnist/radio host/author had this to say after filling a story on a Friday about an event that happened the following day: "We — the editors and I — got caught in an assumption."

## MOST DUBIOUS NEW YORK TIMES TREND STORY

IN THE MAN DATE. Jennifer 8. Lee reveals that heterosexual men occasionally have dinner together.

## THE BETTER BALANCE AWARD

Kenneth Tomlinson. Laws, schmaws. The soul of the nation is at stake!

## VISIONARY LEADERSHIP AWARD

Les Moonves. Now that the Big Three are gone, the CBS chairman wants to spice things up on the nightly newscast. New this fall: Barbara Bush — naked, of course — reports on the simple pleasures of the working poor.

## BEST ON-AIR SCRAP

**Winner:** NBC's David Gregory and White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan. First there was the Rumble over Rove, then the Blame Game. Prediction: Defending Helen Thomas's honor, Gregory challenges McClellan to a duel in '06.



**Runner-up:** Bob Novak and James Carville. All that swearing and Carville didn't even mention Novak's side gig hawkking confidential sessions with Washington's power elite for only \$595 a pop.

## IN-DEPTH REPORTING AWARD

NBC's Michelle Kosinski appears in a live shot on the *Today* show paddling a canoe to demonstrate the extent of flooding in New Jersey. Then two men trudge across the



frame, showing the water to be only ankle-deep. Okay, so they were really tall men. In platform shoes.

## THE 'KEEP MOVING, FOLKS' AWARD

Fresh from his awkward two-step with Judith Miller, *Times* Publisher Arthur Sulzberger Jr. goes on *Charlie Rose* and manages to frustrate the perpetually prostrate host.

## FIRST AMENDMENT AWARD

The *York Daily Record*. The paper's proposed employee contract prohibited such activities as "disparagement" of the company, on or off the job. And while you're at it, tread lightly on the publisher's pals, too.

## THE BOTTOM LINE AWARD

After cutting his salary by two-thirds and publishing him less frequently, the Tribune Company gave Jules Witcover — a legendary Baltimore *Sun* political reporter — one final kick in the teeth: a one-sentence, overnighted termination letter

thanking the seventy-eight-year-old for his service. Journalism's future is indeed bright.

## MOST AMAZINGLY HUMBLE JOURNALIST AWARD

**Male:** Anderson Cooper. This plain-speakin' Yalie son of privilege and power insists he's just a normal guy with normal-guy problems. But how many glamour shots must he endure to dispel his erotic appeal?

**Female:** Maureen Dowd. Just 'cause she dated John Tierney and Howell Raines doesn't mean she flirted with them! Gawd! That kind of male chauvinism is downright insulting, baby.



## THE STRAIGHT FACE AWARD

**Winner:** Scott McClellan declares that *Newsweek's* (barely) erroneous story about a Koran being flushed at Gitmo had "damaged" the image of the U.S. abroad — undoing, in one treasonous stroke, all the painstaking work by his boss to ensure that the world loves and respects us.

**Runners-up:** Chuck Colson and C. Gordon Liddy. With Deep Throat unmasked, these two ex-cons declared Mark Felt's White House whistleblowing less than honorable. Vowing to trample your own grandmother to get Nixon reelected and plotting to off a reporter, now that's honorable.

## WHEN P.C. IS B.S.

*"Why are Asian people quiet? Is it okay to go 'commando'? Why do black men look good in purple suits, but white men look like dorks?" These politically incorrect questions might occur to some, but few would think to vocalize them, let alone make them the basis of a column — unless of course you're Phillip Milano of the Florida Times-Union and your column is called "Dare to Ask." The weekly column, launched in January 2005, is a forum for readers to ask and answer potentially indelicate questions, to which Milano adds advice from experts aimed at lending some wisdom to the dialogue. Claire Calzonetti, CJR intern, spoke with Milano in September.*

### What's the point of your column?

I'm trying to change the ground rules for how people talk about race, religion, and cultural differences in this country. I'm trying to tell people that it's okay if they have these questions. It's kind of a warning shot to the rest of the newspaper industry to start having a discourse about these things, because these differences come up in everything. Even with Katrina, race, religion, etc. they are so woven into the fabric of so many different issues. We can't really have a discussion on larger issues such as affirmative ac-

tion or gay issues if we're wondering about the people we're talking about. I'm more interested in providing an accurate representation of what people are really thinking.

### Where do you draw the line between what's offensive and what's healthy?

I guess I draw the line between the edges of hate and hostility. To me, hate is somebody who is saying something nasty, and they really don't care about what you think as opposed to somebody who is asking a somewhat hostile question, but they still want to hear what you've got to say. I think there's a distinction there.

### Who are your biggest critics?

I've had my share of criticism over the years. I've been compared to Adolf Hitler and Isaac Newton. I've had people complain, the Anti-Defamation League for one. I've got to tell you, I've often had more openness to this whole idea and concept from conservatives than necessarily from liberals. The conservatives seem to say, "Yeah, let's have this conversation." Some liberals may think they're above it or they don't want to offend anyone. Conservatives like it because of the politically incorrect stuff; liberals like it because everyone is getting their say.

## SOUND BITE

### "P.S. Thanks for talking Mr. Bush out of bombing our offices!"

— Excerpt from a note to Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain posted on Don't Bomb Us, a blog created by Al-Jazeera after it was reported that in April 2004 President Bush advocated bombing the pan-Arab network's Qatar headquarters, but was dissuaded from doing so by Blair. (It has been suggested that if Bush made such a comment, it was made in jest.)

## LANGUAGE CORNER

### MAGNIFICENT POSSESSION

**W**hat to do about situations like "China and South Korea's rise to challenge Japan's position . . . ?"

That's how it was printed, and that's one solution: with a string of possessive nouns, attach the apostrophe and the "s" only to the last one and assume the reader will read the earlier ones as possessive, too. But with anything more complicated than "Dick and Jane's house," that approach is hardly a bull's-eye. It's marginally acceptable at best, and can be quite tough to follow, as in "Dr. Hwang and his team's production of stem cells . . . was considered . . ."

Another approach to the general problem:

" . . . Mr. Abramoff's and Mr. Scanlon's Indian clients."

But that's a bit cluttered, and with a longer series would be more than a bit.

The optimum solution is to get the possessive notion out of the way first: "The rise of China and South Korea . . ."; "The production of stem cells by Dr. Hwang and his team . . ."; "The Indian clients of Mr. Abramoff and Mr. Scanlon."

Much closer to a bull's-eye.

— Evan Jenkins

*A lot more about writing is in Language Corner at CJR's Web site, [www.cjr.org](http://www.cjr.org), under "Journalism Tools."*

## HARD NUMBERS

**2,100:** Minimum number of U.S. newspaper jobs (from all departments) cut in 2005.

**20.5 cents:** Average amount on the dollar that publicly held newspaper companies earned in 2004.

**11.4 cents:** Average amount on the dollar that blue-chip companies in Standard & Poor's 500 Index earned that year.

**551,000:** Time, in years, that U.S. workers spent reading blogs on the job in 2005.

**\$16.7 million:** Amount of a Pentagon contract awarded to the Rendon Group after 9/11 to monitor Islamic media, including "the location and use of Al-Jazeera news bureaus, reporters, and stringers."

**12:** Minimum number of Iraqi newspapers that a p.r. firm, working on behalf of the U.S. military, has paid to run propaganda.

**124, 30:** Lashes that Iranian courts sentenced bloggers Omid Sheikhan and Ahmad Seyyed Saraj to receive, respectively, for "morals" violations and "offending the authorities."

**100:** Misspelled names that appeared in the Portland *Oregonian* in 2005.

**30:** Percent that spelling has improved there since 2004.

**\$13,998.55:** Amount Fox News compensated Tom DeLay for round-trip travel between Sugar Land, Texas, and Washington, D.C., so the recently indicted congressman could appear on *Fox News Sunday*.

Sources: E&P, AP, Ad Age, Times of London, *Oregonian*, NYT, PoliticalMoneyLine

# THE AMERICAN NEWSROOM

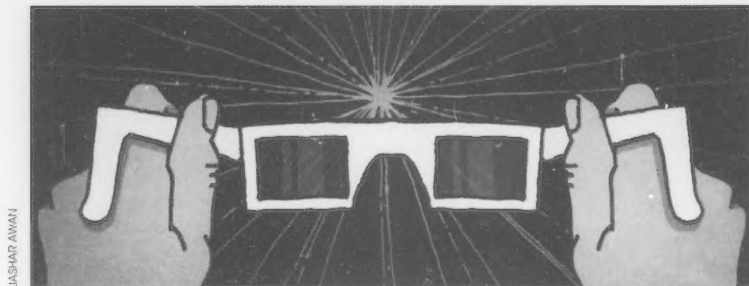
THE WEEKLY STANDARD  
Washington, D.C.

PHOTO BY SEAN HEMMERLE









JASHAR AWAN

## At the J-Schools: the Case Against Ideological Engineering

# ON BALANCE

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN

**D**avid Horowitz, the left-wing activist turned right-wing activist, recently produced a study of the ideological leanings of faculty members at leading law and journalism schools. He found that they are overwhelmingly liberal, with the sole exception of the University of Kansas journalism school, and this finding led to a flurry of press attention, including a column by John Tierney in *The New York Times*. The charge itself — that the liberal bias that conservatives have long detected in the “mainstream media” also exists, and may even originate, in journalism schools — is not new. In the two and a half years that I have been dean of Columbia’s Graduate School of Journalism, I’ve heard it repeatedly. One year Bill O’Reilly, the Fox News star, made the charge on the air, and then graciously accepted an invitation to come to the school and elaborate.

What was original about Horowitz’s study was that it was a study, not just an assertion. He and a coauthor, Joseph Light, got hold of voter-registration information for just over half of about a thousand faculty members at eighteen “elite” law and journalism schools. They found many more registered Democrats than Republicans. At Columbia’s journalism school it was fifteen to one; at Stanford’s law school, twenty-eight to one; at Berkeley’s journalism school, ten to zero. He seemed to have moved beyond the realm of mere supposition and anecdote.

Before getting to the larger issues involved, it’s worth noting that Horowitz did not actually build a lay-down-the-cards case for the existence of bias at professional schools. He has not studied — yet — what they teach, which is the real issue. He also has

not found out what the students’ political affiliations are. At the outset of this academic year, Columbia had a visit from Hugh Hewitt, the conservative radio host, author, and blogger, who was also looking for liberal bias. He polled students in one class — “How many of you own guns? Go to church regularly? Voted for Kerry?” — and found them to be, by his lights, overwhelmingly liberal. That was only a couple of weeks into the school year, which meant that if we were guilty of anything, it was not of having ideologically indoctrinated our students but of having failed to move them from left to center. Horowitz didn’t prove as much as he says he proved.

Horowitz has been campaigning for some time against ideological bias in universities — journalism schools and law schools are only his latest targets. What he says he is for is the kind of ideological balance that he didn’t find on professional school faculties, which is an idea that sounds much more commonsensical and innocuous than it really is. The great American universities in their current form are the result of their having embraced, in the late nineteenth century, the “German model” of higher education, in which professional scholars conduct disinterested research according to strict rules. The idea of objective journalism emerged at about the same time. So did institutions like think tanks and professional associations. All these Progressive Era inventions were aimed at creating trained experts who would rise above their personal passions and biases in order to expand knowledge in ways that would benefit the public. Columbia’s journalism school was founded by Joseph Pulitzer in precisely this spirit.

For many years, the legitimacy of expertise and

value-free research has been under attack. This very magazine published a cover story not long ago questioning the standard notion of the journalistic ideal of objectivity. But the attacks have come mainly from the Left, and often from within the academy. Michel Foucault coined the term "power/knowledge" to communicate the inextricability of information from the social position of its provider — that is, he did not see information as standing free from ideology. Later, however, roughly the same idea has been taken up by conservatives, and that is significant, because in the United States, the conservative movement is a lot more powerful than the academic Left. Horowitz's argument is quite similar in structure to the argument (made, again, mainly by the Left) about diversity and multiculturalism: since there is no such thing as transcending one's perspective, important institutions in society, including universities and news organizations, should consciously create a balance of perspectives. That's why Horowitz wants universities to hire conservative faculty members. As he writes:

Physicists teach the same laws of motion and optics whether they believe in high taxes or low ones; economic freedom or a welfare state. But, when it comes to interpreting the law or reporting on public affairs, everyone will agree that ideology and political predisposition matter. If law school faculties predominantly represent the views of the political left — as they do — this has far-ranging implications for the training of future lawyers and judges. The same holds true for journalism schools that are responsible for training future members of the nation's press corps.

At the very least, to carry out Horowitz's program would require our asking prospective faculty members (and, perhaps, students, too) to tell us their political views, which we don't do, and which seems intrusive to me. What's more important is that Horowitz assumes that everything we teach has a political view embedded within it. Journalism is not physics, but most of what we teach does not have any obvious ideological content. There is not a liberal or conservative way to teach students how to write clearly and accurately and quickly, or how to work by high ethical standards. Almost all the craft-style teaching we do in the various journalistic media, and much of the subject-matter teaching, have no ideological dimension that I can see. To follow Horowitz's prescription would be to make our school more ideological, not less.

Also, even in the realm of political journalism, if perfect objectivity is unattainable, it can still be a goal worth striving for.

Horowitz recently attended the White House Hanukkah party; here's his account of his moment in the presidential presence:

I hadn't been at an event with the President (who is looking slim and trim) in four years and didn't know

if he would recognize me. But the minute he saw me in the line he called out "Horowitz" with a big smile on his face, then embraced me in a bear hug. In the moment I had his ear I said, "Thank you for taking all those arrows for the rest of us." Graciously, he said, "You take more than I do," which I don't and said so. Then as I was walking away he called out, "Don't let them get to you." I called back, "Don't you either," and he replied in a strong voice. "I won't."

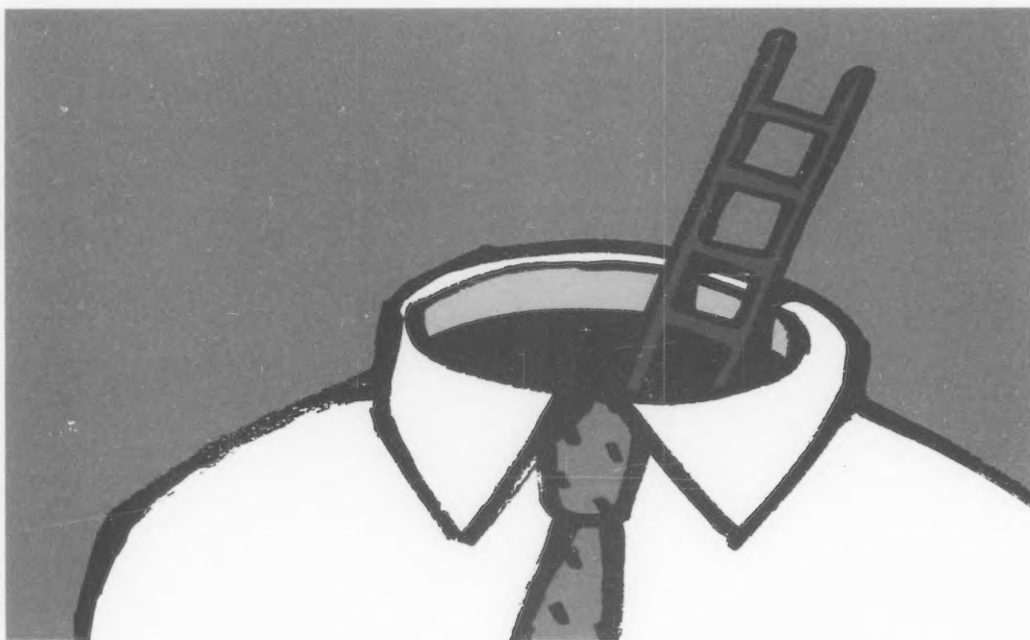
There is a long tradition — which is in no danger of ending anytime soon — of journalism operating as a branch of politics. When objective journalism emerged, it was supposed to create an additional social role for journalists, as providers of information from which people could draw their own conclusions. To do that requires the journalist to try to suppress (of course, always imperfectly) personal feelings about a subject, and to seek out and convey information without regard to which side it might arm. What the Horowitz approach may gain in refreshing honesty is outweighed by what it loses by just giving up on the informational mission entirely. You have to be awfully cynical to believe that in the aggregate, reporters who work in an opinion-suppressive, rather than -expressive, vein do more harm than good to the public discourse.

I will confess that I have personally engaged in an act of ideological balance-seeking at Columbia. For the past two years, I have co-taught a course called "National Affairs Reporting" with Tunku Varadarajan, the editorial features editor of *The Wall Street Journal*. I chose him mainly because he is an excellent teacher and thinker, but secondarily because I thought he could do an especially good job of acquainting the students in the class with what is the majority position on a series of major national issues. But I did this because the content of the course was explicitly how to cover policy debates. Our mission should be to rid our students of automatic or blinkered thinking; to teach them to recognize and try to overcome the assumptions and preconceptions they bring to a story, to make them push themselves to find alternative perspectives. Sometimes this entails explicitly considering ideological positions. It doesn't always, though. For us to build in liberal-conservative balance in every hire and every class would be to take us away from our core assumption, which is that reporting can get you meaningfully closer to the truth. Not a version of truth — the truth. ■

Nicholas Lemann is dean of Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism and a New Yorker staff writer. His next book, *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War*, will be published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in 2006.

## How Newspapers Might Escape Wall Street and Redeem Their Future

# A WAY OUT ?



TERESA SOTALEVICH

BY DOUGLAS McCOLLAM

**I**n the spring of 1971 Fritz Beebe, a former partner in the New York law firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore, and chairman of The Washington Post Company, approached the owner, Katharine Graham, with a dilemma. The company, Beebe said, was running out of money. Over the years the Post had been fairly generous in granting stock options to favored employees, and the cost of buying out those options had put the company in a bind.

But Beebe had a solution. Following the lead of bigger rivals, such as Knight Ridder and Times Mir-

ror, he advised that the company go public. Selling stock in the Post would ease the company's cash crunch, Beebe explained, and otherwise, the Post would have to sell one of its television stations. Graham hesitated. "I wish I had understood the whole thing better than I did," she wrote in her 1997 autobiography of the decision to go public. "I . . . simply took Fritz's word for the problem and assumed we only had two choices: either go public or sell WJXT." The company went public, making its initial offering on June 15, 1971, the same week the Pentagon Papers controversy erupted. "I wasn't sure what being



a public company entailed," Graham wrote in her autobiography, "but I knew there would be obligations and disciplines that were not imposed on private companies."

In the past year, many newspaper companies, including the Post, have been getting a refresher on just how onerous the "obligations and disciplines" of being publicly owned can be. Despite profit margins that generally hover around 20 percent — extraordinary when compared to almost any other business sector — newspaper stocks are getting pummeled. As of early December, the stock of Gannett, the country's largest newspaper publisher, was down 28 percent for the year. Tribune Company was down 29 percent. The New York Times Company was down 35 percent. Even the Washington Post Company, whose diverse holdings have insulated it somewhat from the market's pessimism about newspapers, was down 25 percent.

In an effort to arrest the slide and appease shareholders, virtually every major newspaper in the country got busy slashing editorial positions and aggressively cutting costs. The market wasn't impressed. In November Bruce S. Sherman, whose money management firm Private Capital Management owns 19 percent of Knight Ridder, demanded that the company put itself up for sale. The initial round of bidding in early December generated interest from Gannett, McClatchy, and others, including a trio of private investment banks.

Sherman's move sent tremors through the newspaper world. PCM has significant stakes in eight other newspaper companies, including Gannett, McClatchy, and The New York Times. Many analysts see Sherman's effort to force the sale of Knight Ridder as a no-win proposition for journalism. If it fails, then investors may be further convinced that newspapers are terrible investments and pull out of the sector altogether. If it succeeds, then Sherman or other institutional investors may try to duplicate the maneuver with other newspapers, forcing companies to either auction themselves off or make even steeper cuts in an attempt to lift their stock.

Either way, the combination of the precipitous decline of stock prices, shareholder unrest, and the general pessimism of the market concerning the newspaper business has raised an interesting question: Is there any good reason for newspapers to remain publicly traded companies?

I put that question to Donald Graham, Katharine Graham's son and the sixty-year-old chairman and largest individual shareholder of The Washington Post Company. Sitting in his spacious ninth-floor office, Graham put his feet up on his coffee table and appeared a bit perplexed by the notion. After mulling it over a bit he said that no, he wouldn't consider taking the company pri-

vate: "Public ownership has been great for us." Undeniably, for much of the past thirty-four years, it has been. After it went public in 1971, stock in the Washington Post Company rose from \$26 a share to almost \$1,000 a share in late 2004. But as of early December it had dropped more than \$250 for the year and did not appear to have touched bottom. Graham concedes that he is worried about the business challenges facing the company. Indeed, he calls them the most severe in its history, but says he has no regrets about his mother's decision to go public. Among other things, Graham notes that being a public company brought in the investment guru Warren Buffett, to whom Graham (and others) give considerable credit for making the Post a successful company. Graham says he keeps abreast of the stock price, but concentrates on the long term. "Our focus is not on the stock price, but on the value of the company," he says.

Similar sentiments were expressed by *The New York Times's* publisher, Arthur Sulzberger Jr., who, like Graham, thinks public ownership has been a boon to the company despite recent difficulties. "There is a real value to companies not being artificially isolated from the demands of the market," says Sulzberger. "It enforces a certain kind of discipline."

He admits that recently such discipline has been hard to endure, and says that the American newspaper industry is facing its greatest crisis in its 400-year history. Still, Sulzberger doesn't see private ownership as a solution. "Changing your capital structure doesn't get you out of the problems we face," he says.

Of course, the Times's own capital structure indicates that it doesn't totally trust the market, either. Like the Post, Dow Jones, McClatchy, and other family-controlled newspapers, the Times has two tiers of stock — the voting class, owned by the family, and the B-shares, which are owned by outside investors. This kind of ownership provides a layer of insulation between the paper and market forces, and immunizes the company against the kind of forced-sale tactics that Bruce Sherman is using on Knight Ridder, which has only a single class of stock.

That said, Sherman's company does own about 15 percent of The New York Times Company, which makes him a force that Sulzberger can't ignore. "Even if family has voting stock in its back pocket," says John Morton, a newspaper analyst and consultant, "they still develop a culture of being publicly owned and reporting to Wall Street — it infects the way they run their business whether they want it to or not."

How does that "infection" manifest itself? In general, Wall Street cares about one thing: growth. It's not interested in how you've done or how you're doing, only in how you will do. This outlook explains, for example, why investors initially fell in

love with the Internet, and remain enamored of Google and other hi-tech acrobats. With a short track record of earnings and no obvious barriers to growth, the market sees virtually unlimited potential, and rewards such companies handsomely. Newspapers, by contrast, are a mature business with a limited upside.

In response, many newspapers are desperately trying to convince the market that they, too, are sexy, hi-tech companies. To please the market, companies like Knight Ridder have done almost everything their large shareholders have asked — slashing staff, making stories more “reader friendly,” searching for Internet strategies that might magically transform newspa-

Compared with the bloodless managers currently squeezing the life out of journalism, Charles Foster Kane looks pretty damn good.

pers from dead-wood deadbeats into new-media darlings. To date, none of it has worked.

It hasn't worked precisely because the real appetite of shareholders is for greater short-term profitability, not long-term strategic investment. That's clearly an impediment as newspapers negotiate the transition from twentieth-century monopolies to players in a twenty-first-century media world where competition comes from all directions — a shift that involves a number of complicated puzzles, such as engaging young readers, that cannot be solved quickly. As Paul Ginocchio, a media analyst with Deutsche Bank, put it: “It's easier to increase short-term operating profits with cost-cutting now than to grow future revenues by making strategic investments that hurt profits in the near term.”

Back in the 1980s, when pariah companies found themselves undervalued and unable to budge their stock prices, they frequently turned their backs on shareholders and took their companies private, using a tool known as the leveraged buyout, a fancy way of saying they borrowed a lot of money from private investors and used it to buy all the stock from shareholders, trading debt for equity. Leveraged buyouts, though, got something of a bad name, becoming linked in the public's mind with corporate raiders and junk-bond salesmen, some of whom wound up in jail. By the early 1990s, recession, insider-trading scandals, and the savings and loan debacle had effectively put an end to the buyout craze. Fifteen years later, though,

private equity investors are back on the scene, more restrained, but also more well-heeled. “Increasingly you are seeing private equity firms buying companies as opposed to other companies buying companies,” says Dean Singleton, head of Media News Group, which invests in media properties. “There is a lot of money in the pipeline from pension funds, boomer 401(k)s, insurance companies. There is more money than the stock market can absorb.”

In many ways, Singleton and others observe, newspapers are ideal candidates for leveraged buyouts because they have such high operating margins, meaning they can service a lot of debt without drowning in it. They also don't have to make a lot of capital-intensive expenditures on research and development or infrastructure. As Doug Arthur, a newspaper industry analyst with Morgan Stanley, put it, “These papers throw off tremendous cash flow and being publicly traded is very stressful. If Knight Ridder was already private, they wouldn't be going through this right now.”

To be clear, private equity investors are not Santa Claus. They can be every bit as rapacious as the most aggressive fund manager. But a private investor who buys into newspapers at this point is likely to understand the challenges the industry faces, and at the very least will get the newspapers off the quarterly earnings treadmill that currently drives so much decision-making in the industry. Because private ownership need not be driven by short-term profits, it has the potential to give newspapers desperately needed space to plan and invest in long-term strategies, on both the business and editorial sides. “You can't view it just like any other business,” says James Rutherford, a managing director of Veronis Suhler Stevenson, a merchant bank that focuses on media properties. “To do it and be successful, you have to understand that editorial is the key part of the franchise.”

To illustrate his point, Rutherford recalls how, because of newsprint rationing during World War II, papers had to choose between running advertisements or news. Some, like *The New York Times*, chose news and absorbed the losses, while its competitors chose to rely more heavily on ads. By the end of the war, Rutherford notes, the *Times* had achieved a market dominance that it has yet to surrender. “People like us, who invest for five or ten years, look over multiple years,” says Rutherford. “We don't get all twitched out over what happened in the March quarter.”

Rutherford says he is aware of the threats that companies like Google and Craigslist pose to newspapers, especially to the all-important classified advertising, but says he thinks newspapers actually enjoy some built-in advantages. “They've got multiple revenue streams, good brand names, great access to information in their core markets. They've got a good head start. They just haven't been good at innovation.”

If Rutherford represents the most editorial-friendly version of going private, there are plenty of examples of private equity firms resorting to a "pump it and dump it" strategy, making steep cuts to goose earnings and prettify the balance sheet before flipping the company to another buyer. Consider, for example, a widely circulated analysis of the sale of Knight Ridder done by Morgan Stanley. In gaming out the potential for a leveraged buyout of Knight Ridder (one of several scenarios considered by the analysis), Morgan Stanley offers a range of potential outcomes, based largely on how much the buyer pays for the stock. From a journalistic standpoint, the less the buyer pays for the company the better it would be for the health of the newsroom. Under the Morgan Stanley analysis, if a buyer paid \$65 a share for Knight Ridder, a bit below the historic valuation for newspapers, then with modest cuts it could realize an internal rate of return of close to 25 percent on its investment. If, on the other hand, the buyer has to stretch up to \$75 a share, then the rate of return drops dramatically — unless the buyer institutes draconian cutbacks, such as closing some of the chain's less profitable papers. Because newspapers have enjoyed such healthy operating margins, buyers have traditionally been willing to pay a fairly high price to acquire them. Now, with growing threats to those fat margins, some analysts and investors think the price that prospective buyers

should be willing to pay for Knight Ridder and other newspaper companies needs to come down. The problem, as James Rutherford sees it, is that some investors still want to see newspapers valued like high-growth Internet companies, driving up the price and all but insuring that any buyer would have to strip the operation clean to make the deal pay off. That, he says, is shortsighted. "Getting people's expectations adjusted is key," says Rutherford. "You can streamline the production and delivery, but if you don't have a good product no one will buy it. To do that on a daily basis takes good reporters and editors and some vision of what people want."

What newspapers really need, above all else, is ownership that values journalism and understands that the work of gathering, writing, and publishing the news is an inherently inefficient business that is in a period of profound transition. The private press baron of the past might have been a blowhard propagandist with the ethics of a wharf rat, but at least he loved the trade. Compared with the lineup of bloodless managers and mandarins currently squeezing the life out of journalism, Charles Foster Kane looks pretty damn good. So while there is no guarantee that the private ownership of today would recognize the value of journalism, it has already been established that Wall Street does not. Maybe it's time we took our chances. ■

*Douglas McCollam is a contributing editor to CJR.*

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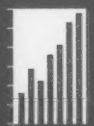
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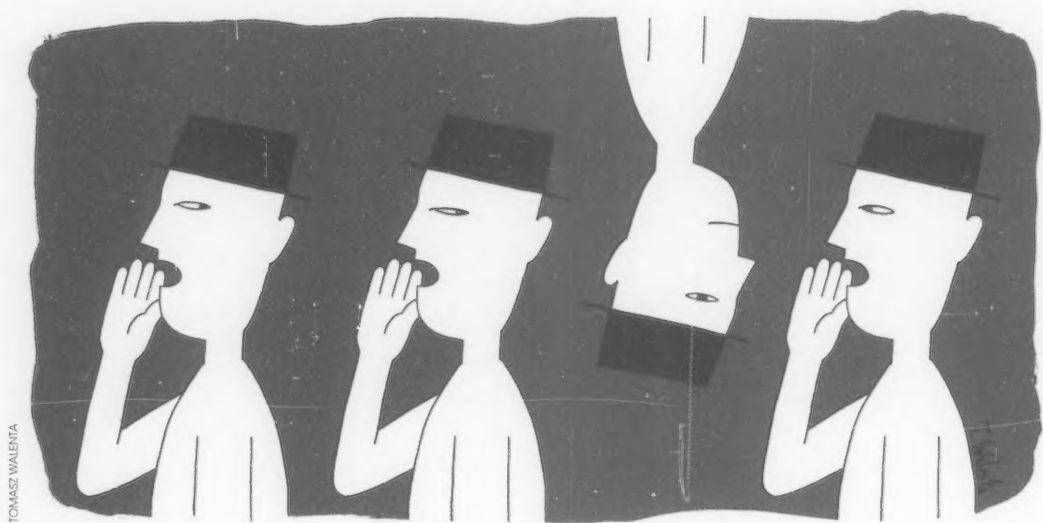
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Two prosecutors have demanded my sources.  
What a difference a decade makes.

## MY PLAME PROBLEM — AND YOURS



BY TIMOTHY M. PHELPS

**T**he forces unleashed by Robert Novak's column unveiling the secret agent Valerie Plame have shaken the White House, helped destroy any pretense of a reporter's privilege in federal criminal cases, and obliged at least ten Washington journalists, including me, to confront a new, insidious tactic that has altered the balance of power between journalist and leak investigator. But it is interesting to remember that when Novak's column came out in July 2003, it failed to create much of a stir in the equatorial-strength humidity of a Washington summer.

Perhaps it was because Novak mentioned Plame only in passing in the sixth paragraph. Perhaps the aging warrior of the Right just does not have the

impact he used to. But if the aim was to discredit Plame's husband, former ambassador Joseph C. Wilson, or, as Wilson alleges, intimidate others from calling attention to government misstatements, as Wilson had in a July 6 op-ed in *The New York Times*, the arrow fell short.

Administration officials apparently tried to goose the leak by phoning other reporters and focusing attention on it, according to Wilson, who says that after the column appeared he started getting calls from reporters who had been called by the White House. Those efforts also failed.

Other than *Time*, which ran a piece on its Web site three days later by its new White House correspondent, Matthew Cooper, that said its own "gov-



ernment officials" (now known to be Karl Rove and I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby) had talked to the magazine about Plame, it was primarily liberal Bush administration critics like David Corn of *The Nation* and Paul Krugman of *The New York Times* who raised questions about the outing of a CIA agent.

In his *Times* op-ed, Wilson said the Bush administration had "twisted" information from his 2002 trip to Niger in order to exaggerate Iraq's nuclear threat. Novak's column said, "according to administration officials," that the Niger trip had been set in motion by Wilson's wife, a CIA "Agency operative." When I read the column I wondered whether Plame was working undercover. So, along with *Newsday's* Knut Royce, known for his sources in the intelligence community, I started making inquiries.

A week later we wrote a story quoting "intelligence officials" as saying that Plame did indeed work undercover at the CIA, on weapons of mass destruction, raising the possibility that the disclosure to Novak broke the law. Novak himself volunteered something interesting when we reached him. "I didn't dig it out, it was given to me." His sources, he said, "thought it was significant; they gave me the name and I used it."

Our story was the first to establish that Plame was undercover. In fact not only was she working for the secret "D. O." or Directorate of Operations at agency headquarters in Langley, Virginia, but she was also still in transition from an even deeper underground mission as a "NOC" for Nonofficial Cover, posing as a businesswoman during agency-sponsored trips to Europe. The day after our story there were calls for an investigation by Democrats, and White House press secretary Scott McClellan vigorously asserted that "That is not the way this White House operates." But the matter still was not on most editors' agendas.

In late September MSNBC and CBS reported that the CIA had asked the Justice Department to investigate the security breach. Such requests are routine and almost never lead to serious investigations. In a front-page story on Sunday, September 28, *The Washington Post* led with the preliminary Justice Department inquiry. But the real news was down in the fifth paragraph:

Yesterday, a senior administration official said that before Novak's column ran, two top White House officials called at least six Washington journalists and disclosed the identity and occupation of Wilson's wife . . .

"Clearly, it was meant purely and simply for revenge," the senior official said of the alleged leak.

**T**his story finally set off the furor that led Attorney General John Ashcroft to recuse himself and his deputy, James Comey, and to appoint the tough-minded Patrick Fitzgerald to investigate the leak. Two days after the *Post* story, the Justice Department told the White

House that it was conducting a full formal investigation of the Plame outing, and ordered that all White House staff members preserve documents relating to conversations with Novak, Royce, and me. (Sources told us that the CIA had referred not only Novak's column but our *Newsday* story to the Justice Department for investigation because we, too, had revealed new classified information — that Plame was working undercover.) Subsequently the document requests relating to the three of us were sent to the CIA and top officials at the Pentagon, as well as hundreds of senior officials at the State Department, where I cover Middle East policy. This would certainly improve my name recognition, but it was also rather chilling to sources I already had.

*Newsday* decided that Royce and I should no longer cover the story, since we were now part of

Don't worry, Fitzgerald said. He was not asking us to name our sources. He simply wanted information about discussions with the sources. Oh.

it. I play a dual role as reporter and editor, and I had to withdraw from any editing involvement as well. So Royce and I could no longer work the story we had been among the first to recognize. We were thus left to watch from the sidelines as the story grew, and to reflect on what it tells us about the sobering changes over the last decade in the standing of the press in America.

**R**oughly two months after he empaneled a grand jury in Washington in December 2003, Patrick Fitzgerald called *Newsday* saying he wanted to talk to us. So far as I know, we were the first reporters he contacted, with the possible exception of Novak, whose interactions with Fitzgerald are still unknown.

Don't worry, Fitzgerald assured us, he was not asking us to name our sources. He simply wanted some information about our discussions with the sources. Oh.

When it was announced in January that Fitzgerald would ask officials who could have talked to reporters to sign documents waiving their right to confidentiality, I scoffed. Surely no reporter would take such a document seriously. It seemed clear that these waivers were coerced, that they would not have been signed freely. The whole thing seemed like a joke.

But not to our lawyers. Fitzgerald's call and subsequent follow-ups set off an anguished conversation within the paper about our rights under the First Amendment versus our responsibilities in a criminal case involving national security and the White House. Raymond Jansen, then *Newsday's* publisher, wanted us to do our best to cooperate without violating fundamental principles.

In our case, Fitzgerald intimated that he might have a waiver from one or more of our sources. These exploratory conversations between a prosecutor and news organization usually involve quite a bit of shadow boxing. Neither side wants to give too much away, so things tend to be discussed in theoretical terms. But my impression was that Fitzgerald may have talked to or planned to talk to someone who had admitted talking to us. It seemed likely to us, however, that that person would deny having disclosed that Plame was undercover.

What Fitzgerald wanted us to do, among other things, was to differentiate between Source A, B, or C. Without giving up any names, would we simply outline which source had said what in our story?

To Royce and me, who have sixty-six years of journalism experience between us, this was out of the question. For one thing, it seemed that the waivers were not freely given and were therefore worthless. It was clear that a refusal to sign would lead to dismissal. We would have to talk personal-

ly to our sources and have them assure us convincingly they wanted us to talk. But more fundamentally, why would we want to do anything to help anyone track down our sources? Even if Source A did want us to talk, would not our participation help lead Fitzgerald to Source B? And finally, to ask a source to release us from a promise of anonymity may be, in a leak investigation, to ask for a favor he or she can't refuse. A negative answer might be construed as an obstruction of justice.

The fact that this affair was not so simple to everyone involved, including Fitzgerald, was a testament to how much things have changed since the last time I was the subject of a leak investigation. In 1991 I was the first to report, followed closely by Nina Totenberg of National Public Radio, that Anita Hill had accused the Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment, creating a whirlwind. The Senate voted to confirm Thomas and then to hire a special counsel, Peter Fleming, to investigate who in the Senate gave confidential information to Totenberg and me.

We were subpoenaed to appear before the special counsel, and *Newsday* and NPR were separately subpoenaed to produce notes and other documents. My lawyers at the time, Robert Warren and Theodore Olson, took an uncompromising stand. I

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knew I would not name any names, but I worried that if I testified about, say, the timeline of my reporting, I might give the special counsel some crucial information.

We decided that I would testify to affirm the truth of what I had written and said later in public, but nothing more. For four hours, I kept repeating my assertion that the First Amendment protected me from divulging even the most ridiculously petty details. Totenberg would take a similar stance.

During this time, newspapers across the country championed our First Amendment cause in editorials and news stories. The television networks interviewed us sympathetically. The issue became a First Amendment cause célèbre. Eventually, the Senate could not take the heat and refused to enforce its own subpoenas. My source testified that he or she had not been the one to tell me or Totenberg about Anita Hill, and later discreetly thanked me for my protection.

Like every other reporter's-privilege battle in federal courts, our brief in the Anita Hill case relied on *Branzburg v. Hayes*, the now thirty-four-year-old Supreme Court case, which actually was decided against the three reporters involved by a vote of five to four. But one of the justices in the majority, Lewis Powell, wrote a separate concurring opinion saying vaguely that *he* thought there were some limitations on when a reporter could be forced to

testify. Since then, countless legal briefs have rested on the minority in the case and on Powell's opinion.

But in the twelve years between the Anita Hill case and Plame, the press's convenient theory that Justice Powell's concurrence granted us some rights has lost considerable ground. We were mindful of this slippage as we debated what to do about Fitzgerald. But Royce and I told our editors at *Newsday* that we would become pariahs in Washington if we agreed to testify — that no other Washington reporter would ever do so. *Newsday* backed us up, and told Fitzgerald in mid-April that we would not help in any way. He threatened a subpoena that for some reason never came.

**O**f course, we were dead wrong about what the other reporters would do. But each reporter who has testified in the case has faced different circumstances.

Glenn Kessler, a State Department reporter for *The Washington Post* (and a friend of mine), agreed to be interviewed by Fitzgerald last June about conversations he had with Libby the previous July. Kessler said in a statement that he testified because Libby wanted him to, and that he told Fitzgerald that Libby had not mentioned Wilson or Plame.

With somewhat more difficulty Kessler's colleague, Walter Pincus, eventually reached a deal with Fitzger-



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ald. (His source did not release Pincus from his promise of confidentiality, but eventually revealed himself to Fitzgerald.) Tim Russert of NBC reached a deal that limited the scope of the questions.

That left Cooper, the primary author of *Time's* online follow-up to Novak's column, and Judith Miller of *The New York Times*, who clearly attracted Fitzgerald's interest when he learned of meetings between Miller and Libby around the time of the leak.

We are all too familiar with what happened next. In February a three-judge-panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit ruled unanimously that *Branzburg* did not protect Cooper and Miller in a criminal case, another nail in the coffin for reporters' rights in federal courts. On June 30, *Time* magazine did what until that point was unthinkable, handing over Cooper's notes and e-mails to Fitzgerald, over Cooper's objection. Fitzgerald now knew that Cooper's source was none other than Karl Rove. Cooper agreed to testify a week later after a last-minute call from his source freeing him. That left Judy Miller.

I was reporting in southern Iraq in July and largely out of touch with what was happening in Washington, though I knew that Miller went to jail on July 6. Even though her source — now known to be

Libby — had signed a waiver, she said that she was not convinced that he had done so freely. Miller and the *Times* had taken *exactly* the same stand that Royce and I and, ultimately, *Newsday* had taken the previous year.

When I returned from Iraq in early August I was dumbfounded at the lack of attention she was getting. A national reporter was in jail for the first time in years, and, apart from the occasional editorial in the *Times* and a persistent cry for help from Lou Dobbs of CNN, there was almost nothing in the press.

Where was the outrage? What happened to the First Amendment lobby, so active in the Anita Hill case? What had changed?

*Branzburg* has been slipping away as an underpinning for our constitutional claim, of course. And underneath the legal argument is a familiar litany of economic, cultural, and political factors that have eroded the standing of the press perhaps more than we realize.

But I think the biggest difference in this case may lie in who Miller is, and who her sources are. And I think that's a shame.

The journalistic community confused its understandable concern about Miller's reporting and methods with her First Amendment cause. Not only do we not get to pick our standard bearer in a court of law, but we cannot distinguish between sources we like and those we do not. Some complained that Miller's sources weren't "whistleblowers"; they were wrongdoers who ratted out Valerie Plame. And did it perhaps matter that they were Republicans, the dreaded neocons no less?

I asked Floyd Abrams, who represented Miller, the *Times*, and, initially, *Time* magazine, why the atmosphere is so different now than during the Anita Hill investigation, in which he also fought. Abrams has a dog in this fight, of course, but he is still the dean of the First Amendment lawyers. He spoke of a press that has lost some of its sense of mission. And he spoke of politics. "Some journalists think the wrong people are getting protection," he said. "That's the most dangerous thing of all. Worse than the changes in the law, worse than grand juries going after journalists, is the image of some journalists making such decisions based on a political rather than a journalistic basis. Certainly a lot of the criticism of Judy Miller within the journalistic community is at its core political. There is an extraordinary animus. It's very hard for me to believe that animus would exist if she were protecting different people in a different administration with different views of the war in Iraq."

So how badly has what we might now call the Judy Miller case damaged the First Amendment? For one thing, there is now no protection for journalists in federal criminal cases in Washington and many other areas of the country. In civil cases, where the balancing

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act of constitutional needs is different because lawsuits are considered less compelling than law enforcement, rulings in federal courts have been less stacked against the press. Yet the same federal appeals court that ruled against Miller and Cooper refused in November to block a court order that four journalists must testify in the Wen Ho Lee civil case. (Lee, who was suspected of stealing nuclear secrets for China but later largely exonerated, is suing government agencies for allegedly leaking fake information about him. The four reporters, James Risen of *The New York Times*, Robert Drogin of the *Los Angeles Times*, H. Joseph Hebert of The Associated Press and Pierre Thomas of ABC, as well as a fifth, Walter Pincus of the *Post*, have been held in contempt of court and seem headed for the same anguished decision made by Cooper and Miller.)

In a rare though not yet final victory for the press, a federal district court judge in New York ruled last February 24 that there is a limited reporter's privilege in criminal cases. The legal combatants were none other than Judy Miller and Patrick Fitzgerald. In his more normal role as U.S. attorney in Chicago, Fitzgerald is investigating with another grand jury who in the government may have told Miller about impending government actions against two Islamic charities in Chicago. Judge Robert Sweet blocked his attempt to obtain Miller's phone records.

But meanwhile, even the original case involving Wilson and Plame is still fraught with danger for the press, as Fitzgerald continues to plough through the ranks of Washington journalists, now including Bob Woodward of *The Washington Post* and Viveca Novak of *Time*. All of the journalists who have testified — mostly under agreements restricting their testimony to very specific issues —

are still in jeopardy. If the Libby case goes to trial, Libby's lawyers are not bound by such agreements.

The prosecutor seems to have had the last word about the First Amendment, at least for now. "Journalists are not entitled to promise complete confidentiality — no one in America is," he told Thomas F. Hogan, chief judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Hogan agreed. Of course, we never did have the right to offer complete confidentiality in every circumstance. But as a result of this case and others in the pipeline, the question now is, Can we honestly promise our sources anything? ■

*Timothy M. Phelps is Newsday's Washington bureau chief.*



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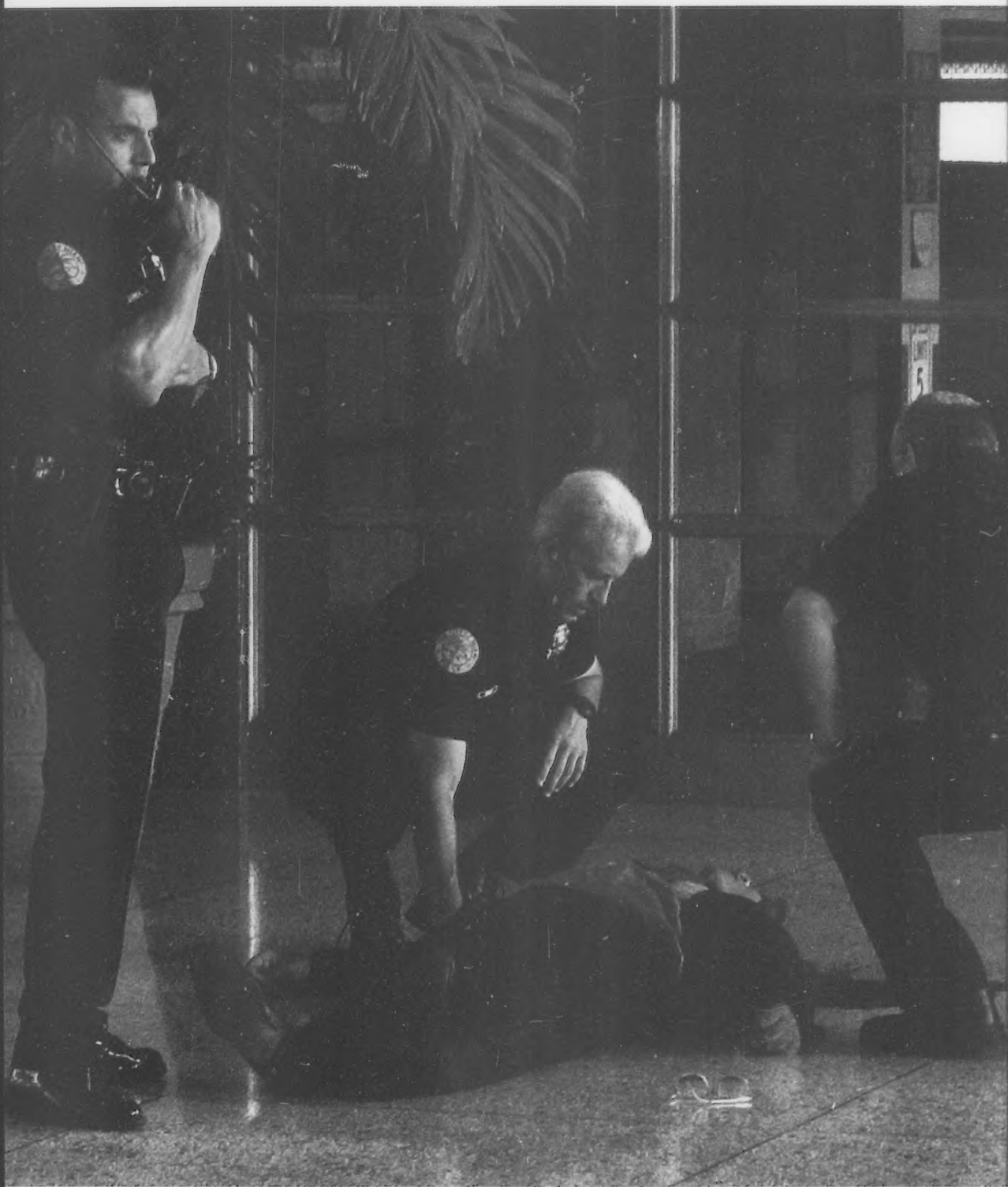
The award is for work published or broadcast during 2005. The winner will receive a \$3,000 prize and participate in a public symposium at Stanford with journalists, academics and others whose work focuses on Western environmental issues.

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The Risser Prize is sponsored by the John S. Knight Fellowships for Professional Journalists and the Bill Lane Center for the Study of the North American West, both at Stanford University.

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**FINAL STATEMENT:** Police officers check the body of Arthur E. Teele after he shot himself in the lobby of *The Miami Herald*.

## A Tale of Two Cities And the Day They Collided

# MIAMI NOIR

BY TOM AUSTIN

**M**iami descended into a terminal noir fugue state in 2005, so it's only fitting that the whole mess would collapse toward a surreal New Year's Eve with Jim DeFede — the *Miami Herald's* star columnist, fired for secretly taping an off-the-record phone conversation with a disgraced local politician an hour before the man shot himself in the lobby of the *Herald* building — eager to serve as grand marshal of the satirical King Mango Strut in Coconut Grove. Though the organizers consider DeFede to be the conscience of Miami, he has gone, in the span of a few months, from a cause célèbre to something of a goof celebrity. Like his source and friend Art Teele, the former county and city commissioner who staged the theatrical suicide, the muckraking DeFede has proved himself to be a tenacious scrapper. He's the writer who would not stay fired, an investigative reporter who turned on his own paper like a dog gone feral.

This has not been a jolly time for the *Herald* — Monday-to-Friday circulation dropped 4 percent in just six months — or for its parent company, Knight Ridder, the second largest newspaper chain in the

country. The company's largest stockholders, who collectively hold 37 percent of the stock, have forced Knight Ridder to test the market for buyers. Preliminary indications of interest were received in December from Gannett, McClatchy, and several private equity firms. In the meantime, the *Herald*, the flagship paper of the chain (which stopped publishing a state edition and shrank its newshole), can't really afford a lingering pall of the sort that has been cast by the death of Art Teele and the controversial dismissal of Jim DeFede.

As with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Teele's suicide would, on a far smaller scale, shine a light on some base truths beneath the surface of Miami. There are two Americas now, as Senator John Edwards put it during the last presidential election, and there are two Miamis: the new Miami, a perky engine of commerce fueled by condominiums and the celebrity machine of South Beach, and Teele's constituents in District Five, the people of Liberty City, Overtown, Model City, and Little Haiti, hard-scrabble neighborhoods in America's poorest city. (After Katrina, The Brookings Institution concluded that poverty

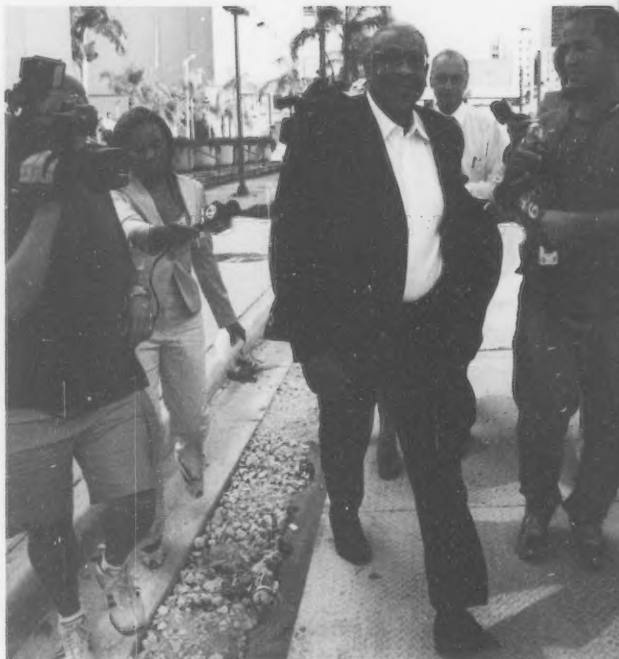
was more severe in Miami's black population than in the poor parishes of New Orleans.)

On the afternoon when he blew his brains out all over his proper blue business suit, Teele was a fifty-nine-year-old man with massive debts and nothing to lose, though his career had once been all glittering promise. He was a decorated Vietnam War veteran who had become a lawyer in his hometown, Tallahassee, where his father was a professor at Florida A&M University. In 1980, he was tapped to serve as the national head of Blacks for Reagan-Bush. That led to a job as head of the Urban Mass Transit Administration with the Department of Transportation, a position that would enable him to funnel \$220 million in federal funds for the Metro-mover and Metrorail transit systems in Miami. (After the Liberty City riots of that era, federal money poured into the city.) Teele subsequently moved to Miami and set up shop as a lawyer.

Throughout the seventies and eighties, such Waspy civic organizations as the Non Group — presided over by Alvah Chapman Jr., then the *Herald's* publisher — pretty much ran Miami. When Teele was first elected to the county commission in 1990, he was hailed as the Great Black Hope and one smart parliamentarian. In 1993, he became commission chairman, and according to the forty-three-year-old DeFede, Teele's rise to power was a triumph over racial politics as usual. "It was remarkable that Art could sway a predominantly Cuban commission . . . What he actually did for his community over the years might have been more bluster than a real legacy."

Despite the *Herald's* endorsement, Teele lost a 1996 bid for county mayor, then slid into the less august realm of the city commission. In time, Miami, as it will for some people with pronounced appetites, lured him to the dark side. At the end, Teele was facing a twenty-six-count federal fraud and money-laundering indictment, and had been removed from office by Governor Jeb Bush after being charged with threatening an undercover Miami-Dade police officer, who was following Teele's wife as part of a corruption investigation. Corruption is a given in Miami, but even by local standards, Teele had become a kind of Bad Lieutenant commissioner.

Teale's alleged sins were compiled in a thick evidentiary file at the Miami-Dade state attorney's office. State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle had been pursuing corruption charges and the file was full of police surveillance reports, unsupported allegations, and juicy reading. Unfortunately for Teele, *Miami New Times* — an alternative free weekly (it belongs to the national chain that recently bought Village Voice Media) — hit the streets on July 27 with a tabloid-style cover story, TALES OF TEELE: SLEAZE STORIES, a few hours before Teele shot himself. It was themed around the low-rent Miami



**GOING DOWN:** Teele emerges from federal court last July 14 after being indicted on twenty-six counts of fraud and money laundering.

imagery of the video game *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* with Teele as a cartoon character, a kind of Captain Corrupt — and consisted almost entirely of the surveillance reports in Teele's file at the state attorney's office. No one, including Teele, had been asked to comment on the allegations, which included Teele taking Gucci shopping bags of cash from drug dealers and hiring both female and transvestite prostitutes. For a married man with a son, run-of-the-mill prostitutes were enough of a problem, but the allegations of bisexuality, the idea that he might be part of local down-low culture, was too much for him to bear.

Florida's "government in the sunshine" law is a noble precept that can also be a mixed blessing: the damning material on Teele had been in the public record weeks before his death, open to anyone with a whiff of initiative. Much of the testimony was uncorroborated, including the ramblings of the transvestite prostitute, Frederick "Mercedes" Davis, who had called from jail and couldn't remember any concrete details about his encounters with Teele, yet insisted that Teele had used his services and shared cocaine with him. (Later on, even the state attorney's office said the information in the file included "salacious and uncorroborated details about Mr. Teele's personal life.")

Teale shot himself at 5:56 p.m. on July 27, timing that would guarantee maximum play on every local

JOSHUA PREZANT/MIAMI HERALD



evening news broadcast. He opted for the grander stage the *Herald* building offered, as opposed to the *New Times* headquarters, a few blocks up Biscayne Boulevard. Teele appears to have been interested in something beyond being remembered as just one more controversial figure crucified by the media. As with many Americans, he seemed to look upon the press as a kind of free-floating court system that could grant final justice. But his suicide was also an intensely personal rebuke, a final swipe at a newspaper that had become an obsession.

## 'POWERFUL FORCES'

Teele had walked over to the *Herald* from his home in the Plaza Venetia, a second-string condo complex just across the Venetian Causeway from the *Herald*. Teele was heading downhill fast, and had shown up at the *Herald* building carrying a canvas book bag with his final legacy, including an apologetic audiotope addressed both to his wife, Stephanie, and to DeFede (a detail that the *Herald* did not report in the days following the suicide), denying the charges of the transvestite and of his womanizing.

Miami teaches its citizens to always look for the dirt under the carpet, and many locals speculated that in firing DeFede a few hours after Teele killed himself, the paper's management used the high-minded excuse of absolute moral standards to get rid of a columnist who has irked a lot of powerful people. In 2004, DeFede came under fire for a column pointing out the controversies surrounding the developer and civic figurehead Leonard Miller — his tract homes didn't hold up too well in Hurricane Andrew — a few days after Miller's death. A tough reporter with a calculated harmless-slob demeanor, DeFede resembles a Santa Claus gone to seed, with unruly tendrils of hair, a permanently unshaven face, and a middle-America husky boy's wardrobe. But he is just as smart as Teele was and, like his friend, he sometimes went too far.

In his canvas bag Teele also enclosed a gift for DeFede, documents about a \$250 million luxury condo project in Overtown called Crosswinds, to be built on public land. Ironically, the land had originally been purchased for the city partly through Teele's efforts, back when he was lobbying out all those federal transportation dollars in the Reagan eighties. Activists fear that the high-end condo development — which will feature retail shops, restaurants, and more than 1,250 apartment units — will displace local residents and change the character of the neighborhood. Sixty-five units are to be turned over to the city and set aside for low-income residents, but this being Miami — a city where the tourist trap Parrot Jungle somehow got federal empowerment-zone grants — many black activists consider the project a land grab. A group called Power

U Center for Social Change has sued the city to stop the project until an impact study is finished, a suit that is pending in federal court; the group has collected more than 650 signatures from Overtown residents who oppose the project.

Like the early pioneers, Miami is always pushing westward, since most of the available waterfront property has been developed. Overtown has been considered the next South Beach for several years. It begins immediately west of Biscayne Boulevard, the north-south road running along the water and famous for the Orange Bowl parade, and is in play on many different profit levels. On the day Teele died, DeFede says, he had distracted him from obsessing over the transvestite's claims by talking about his reporting on Crosswinds. Teele, in turn, warned him to be careful about offending "powerful forces, with links to the *Herald*," that were behind the deal.

As it happens, Overtown and Crosswinds itself are only a few blocks away from *Herald* headquarters. The *Herald* building — which nearly spans the distance between the entrances to the Venetian and MacArthur Causeways leading east over Biscayne Bay from downtown to Miami Beach — is a squat circa 1963, anywhere-USA corporate headquarters of the gulag architecture school. But it's also in a prime location, the ultimate wet lot — as the phrase goes in Miami — in the hottest real estate market in the country. Accordingly, Knight Ridder, the *Herald's* parent company, has capitalized on its assets: in the business section on March 5, the *Herald* announced the sale — for some \$190 million — of ten acres around *Herald* headquarters, mostly parking lots and a series of low-slung historic buildings on Biscayne Boulevard. (This is, of course, significant money; in 2004, Knight Ridder had a net income of \$326.2 million.)

The buyer of the parking lots was Pedro Martin of Terra Group. Not long after, Martin submitted plans to the city for a seven-story shopping mall called City Square, which will also include two sixty-two-story condos. To the north and directly beside the *Herald*, a third condo, sixty-four stories tall, will be built. In a later *Herald* business-section story about the sale, Martin was hailed as a real estate pioneer, and Larry Marbert, vice president of production and facilities for Knight Ridder, had an interesting quote: "Never say never, but we are not actively pursuing the relocation of *The Miami Herald*." Until that point, the *Herald* had insisted that its actual headquarters was not for sale, though Terra Group had filed a master development plan for zoning approval with the city, envisioning yet another sixty-four-story condo on the hallowed ground of One Herald Plaza.

Terra Group also owns the beautiful Freedom Tower, a 255-foot-tall Mediterranean revival masterpiece a few blocks south on Biscayne Boulevard. Built in 1925 as the headquarters for the long gone

*Miami News*, the Freedom Tower — designed by the architects who also created the Waldorf Astoria in New York — is known as Miami's Ellis Island: 400,000 Cuban exiles fleeing Castro (including Pedro Martin) came through the tower, which had been turned into an immigration processing center in the 1960s and early seventies.

Martin has lobbied for an aesthetic atrocity — a \$500 million, sixty-two-story condo that would engulf all that elegance, with the Freedom Tower becoming a kind of glorified hood ornament. In December, the day before a city commission hearing on Martin's plans, he donated Freedom Tower to Miami-Dade College, making the front page of the *Herald*. The next day he made page one again, when the commission approved his plans. No mention was made of Knight Ridder selling its own land to Martin.

In Miami, everyone is ready to throw the dice on the real estate crapshoot, even your hometown newspaper. The *Herald* is an old-fashioned paper that has always seen itself as a master of Miami's blueprint. Tony Ridder, who runs Knight Ridder, was one of the leaders in the creation of the American Airlines Arena downtown. Over the past fifteen years, the *Herald* has used its influence to promote the Cesar Pelli-designed Miami Performing Arts Center and the glory it will bring to Miami; the arts center, which wraps around the historic Sears Tower, is set to open next fall and straddles Biscayne Boulevard, right in front of the *Herald* property. (Knight Ridder actually donated 2.2 acres, east of Biscayne Boulevard.) The sheer scope of the 450,000-square-foot, almost half-a-billion-dollar arts center, which will largely cater to the upper middle class, has been controversial. It's mostly publicly funded, and years of construction delays have added to the cost. Teele, like many others, had argued against the project, but the arts center was always the *Herald's* baby. And somehow it has finally kick-started Overtown's manifest destiny, namely condominiums.

### 'PART OF THE ACTION'

An hour after the fateful phone call that DeFede illegally taped, Teele made one more brief call to DeFede — who was working at home — from the lobby phone in the *Herald* building. In that call, DeFede says Teele was entirely professional and matter-of-fact, a long way from his earlier plea to DeFede: "Who did I piss off in this town?" After he shot himself, the police seized the canvas bag, which eventually wound up with Teele's widow, Stephanie. She still has the contents — the tape he left for her and DeFede as well as the material on Crosswinds. Some enterprising newspaper should look into this, but as DeFede notes, "What are you gonna do — wrestle the widow for the tape?"



NIR VALERON/MAMI HERALD

**CANNED:** The columnist Jim DeFede tells stunned *Miami Herald* colleagues that he has been fired for illegally taping Art Teele an hour before Teele killed himself.

Tom Fiedler, the executive editor of the *Herald* and the man who had hired DeFede away from *New Times*, where he'd been a political reporter and columnist for eleven years, says that the newsroom was naturally interested in Teele's claim that the *Herald* was somehow linked to Crosswinds, and wanted to "find out about any possible conflicts before anyone else did. I don't think we ever asked Mrs. Teele for the file, but we did an exhaustive investigation and determined that the *Herald* and Knight Ridder were not involved in any way."

So what exactly is in Teele's Crosswind's file remains a journalistic mystery in Miami. Lieutenant Bill Schwartz, commander of the media office for the Miami police department, says the police determined there was no "investigative value" in the file. "My suspicion is that it was much ado about nothing."

Still, Denise Perry of the Power U Center for Social Change, who took DeFede around the Crosswinds site and Overtown shortly before he was

fired, is "dying to know" what's in the file. Teele's thought, she says, was that "the land had been given away for nothing at six and a half million dollars. He wanted the property to be sold at true market value — mad cash — and use the money to endow scholarships for Overtown kids. The question of how many units they'll set aside for low-income housing is like rearranging deck chairs on the *Titanic*. They have no real accountability — a \$20,000 fine for every unit that's not turned into low-income housing. No doubt, it'll be total luxury condos when it's finally built."

Matthew Schwartz, the director of urban development for Crosswinds Communities (the multibillion-dollar company is based in the Detroit area) is not worried about any smoking guns in Teele's mystery file. Schwartz spent twenty-four years working for the city and retired as the director of the Miami Downtown Development Authority. "We have been so straight and careful with this project," he said. "There's no real controversy, except for Power U." As head of the Community Redevelopment Agency, Teele had tremendous power in Overtown. Schwartz insists that Teele supported Crosswinds. "It's hard for me to understand, because we had regular meetings with Teele — dinners at public restaurants, even a meeting at his apartment — up until his removal from office."

Power U's Perry says Teele advised her group to be aware of a number of Miami movers and shakers who were interested in Overtown, including Philip Blumberg of American Ventures, a real estate and investment management group (the group launched a venture called the South Florida Urban Initiatives Fund in 2004). Teele's list also included Miami commissioner Johnny Winton, a developer and a foe of Teele; Hodding Carter, former head of the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and Alberto Ibargüen, the foundation's current head, and the former publisher of the *Herald*. (Ibargüen missed Teele's suicide at the *Herald* by nine days, with the situation falling instead into the lap of the current *Herald* publisher and president, Jesús Díaz Jr., who comes from an accounting background and formerly served as the general manager of the *Herald*.)

Schwartz of Crosswinds says that American Ventures has met with Crosswinds officials "about providing financing, but at this point, Crosswinds is the only investor. American Ventures is a solid company, based right here in Coral Gables," he adds. "I think the Knight Foundation has invested with them." The foundation — which has a historical link but no official connection to the *Herald* — is a passive investor in the South Florida Fund and another American Ventures fund. On the purely philanthropic side of its ledger, the \$1.9 billion Knight Foundation has long been a Miami booster. Along with grants intended to strengthen the stan-

dards of journalism — CJR has been a beneficiary of the foundation's philanthropy for years — the Knight Foundation's mission is to promote projects that aid twenty-six "Knight communities" where the Knight brothers had papers during their lifetimes, including Miami. It spends at least \$5 million a year on local priorities in Miami and Fort Lauderdale, with roughly 85 percent going to such neighborhoods as Overtown and East Little Havana. It has also given just over \$4 million to the performing arts center, its resident companies, and a street theater program.

On June 11, 2001, at a gala dinner in Miami, the foundation marked its fiftieth anniversary by giving \$24 million to fifty-four organizations. Among other efforts, the money launched the \$7.5 million Collaborative Overtown Transformation Project, and an Overtown Revitalization Program that included partnerships with the Black Archives/Lyric Theater, and two churches. The foundation also gave a three-year, \$3 million grant to the Collins Center for Public Policy, a Miami-based think tank that originally brought Crosswinds to the table. The Collins Center was part of the "Community Land Trust," designed to "insure that Overtown's residents aren't forced out as redevelopment occurs."

The center is a serious outfit; its board includes such local civic stalwarts as State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle, and it is headed by Rod Petrey, a Holland & Knight lawyer who is also the Knight Foundation's attorney. Petrey, an articulate sort, is no fan of the Teele legacy: "He chewed me out one time, told me I had to have his permission to buy land in Overtown. More than being a foe of anything, he just wanted to be part of the action."

Essentially, Crosswinds is a symbol of two contrary development visions for Overtown. A generally white power structure believes that condos will fix pretty much anything, with Crosswinds in particular raising property values in Overtown and ushering in the return of the black middle class, which is still connected to Overtown's powerful churches. On the other side of the equation are residents who worry about the toll of gentrification on these gritty but authentic neighborhoods for the poor and working class.

A July 28, 2005 *Herald* editorial began with a tough lead — "It's time to move forward on the Crosswinds project in Overtown, Miami's historic — and blighted — black neighborhood" — then conceded that gentrification can displace low-income residents, "but only if the redevelopment proceeds in a vacuum that doesn't take poor residents' needs into consideration." It's easy to find the editorial: visit the Collins Center Web site, click on "gentrification fears" and you go straight to *Herald.com*, complete with *Herald* ads and a *Herald* subscription button.

## ABSTRACT THINKING

In the early fall, when it seems as if the heat will never break, a flock of vultures comes to roost on top of the Dade County Courthouse and stays for the winter. One miserably humid September afternoon, Dan Gelber, the lawyer representing Jim DeFede, assembled the media in his office to pass out copies of the "close out memo" for an investigation of DeFede's taping of Teele's phone call, conducted by the state attorney's office. Besides losing his job, DeFede had also been facing anything between a misdemeanor charge and third-degree felony charges. Florida has a murky law dictating that "all parties must consent to the record-

Tom Fiedler still has no regrets: 'Jim crossed the bright white line of ethics, but I wouldn't hesitate to recommend him for a job.'

ing or disclosure of the contents of any wire, oral, or electronic communication," though a federal appeals court had earlier found that taping a business call without consent was essentially no big deal.

In his "close out memo," Joseph M. Centorino, division chief of the Public Corruption Unit — an outfit Teele and DeFede knew quite well — concluded that the taping *was* an illegal intercept, but that there was the extenuating circumstance of an unlikely friendship between two people who were supposed to be adversaries. No one knows the media drill better than a journalist, and for his lawyer's press conference, DeFede had helped to prepare a handy Cliffs Notes version of the five-page official report, outlining the "significant findings of State Attorney Office Investigation" that also happened to favor his case. The state attorney's office came to the conclusion that DeFede flipped on his tape recorder out of "concern for Teele."

Still, what kind of a friend keeps taping after you've said you don't want to go on the record, and what kind of a journalist separates from his job long enough to be friends with someone like Teele? It all gets a little murky: an off-the-record tape is useless to a reporter, and a personal tape, done out of "concern for Teele," seems fairly pointless, too.

The entire press conference, meanwhile, was an exercise in abstract thinking. DeFede was denouncing his former employer and, at the same time, asking for his old job back. A week later, Chuck Strouse — a former *Herald* writer and the

brand-new editor of *New Times* — wrote a column about the possibility of a union drive at the *Herald* sparked by the firing. On the day Hurricane Katrina bore down on Miami, Tom Fiedler went into the newsroom and inveighed against the News Media Guild. Business is business.

## 'JUST THE STAGE'

On July 27, the day that Teele checked out, police and television news helicopters were whirring overhead as reporters stood around talking to one another, waiting for a sound bite from someone official. Teele had asked the lobby guard, Felix Nazco, to "tell Jim DeFede to tell my wife I love her," then shot himself through the roof of his mouth. It was somehow too real and not real enough, like any disaster scene.

Shortly after six p.m. that day, according to DeFede's timeline of events, DeFede spoke on the phone with the *Herald's* new publisher, Díaz, and the general counsel, Robert Beatty, who is also the vice president of public affairs. Being *Herald* people, management — according to DeFede — immediately assumed the tragedy must have resulted from something DeFede had written in the *Herald*. *New Times* never entered the equation. (Fiedler disagrees, saying the *Herald* always thought the suicide "was about Art himself and, if anything, *New Times*. The *Herald* lobby was just the stage for his last performance; if he was Jim's friend, why would he want to hurt his friend's newspaper?")

For some reason — naïveté, hubris, honor, integrity, or God knows what other impulse — DeFede told Díaz and Beatty about the transgression of taping Teele. According to Fiedler, management told DeFede to come downtown with the tape and advised him to get his own lawyer, which the paper would pay for, to protect himself against any possible criminal charges for illegally taping a conversation. (DeFede finds this version of events vastly amusing: "Common sense dictates that if they'd told me at that point to hire a lawyer, I wouldn't have given them the only evidence, the tape, or even gone to the office. I assumed Beatty was also working on my behalf, and not just the *Herald's*.")

DeFede was interviewed for an online story and given a slot for a page-one column on Teele with a 10:30 deadline; around 8 p.m., when he arrived at the office, managing editor Judy Miller brought him pizza. At 10:35, DeFede walked into Díaz's office, where Beatty and Elissa Vanaver — the vice president of human resources and assistant to the publisher — had gathered to fire him for violating the *Herald's* ethics rules. They also told him they were running a story about his firing in the next day's paper. DeFede's largely positive column about Teele was spiked (on the ground that the interview was illegally recorded and off the record) though, in fact,



the *Herald* later used one detail — that Teele was most upset about the allegations concerning the transvestite — in its own news story. DeFede walked out into the newsroom and, according to one editor, more or less held a “press conference” for an assembly of irate reporters. Downstairs, Teele’s blood was still being cleaned off the lobby floor.

Late that night, DeFede’s sister encouraged him to call a lawyer, and at eight the following morning, he hired Gelber and had him contact the Miami-Dade state attorney’s office, just to assure prosecutors he would cooperate in an investigation. DeFede turned over his transcription of the secretly taped, off-the-record conversation with Teele to Gelber, who showed it to the state attorney’s office. Later on, DeFede appeared at the state attorney’s office without a subpoena or grant of immunity.

On the day after the suicide, Diaz and other *Herald* executives called a press conference, proclaiming that DeFede might have committed a third-degree felony and vowing not to release the tape to prosecutors. The *Herald* management insisted they had a staunch policy of not turning over notes, along with a desire to be sensitive to Teele’s impulse to keep the conversation off the record. They would, in effect, shield the tape, though they hadn’t shielded the reporter. That same day, the *Herald* also ran a tabloid-style, front-page photo of Teele’s blood-soaked body in the *Herald* lobby: typically

enough, the spread was accompanied by a caption from Fiedler that read, “The graphic nature of this photograph will no doubt be disturbing to some readers, but *The Herald* believes it is an essential element in the reporting of this tragic story.”

A few days later, Michael Putney, a local television commentator and occasional *Herald* columnist — he’d written a piece for the *Herald* mentioning that Diaz had been at a dinner party after the firing, talking about how he’d never liked DeFede’s column — went on air and broke the story that the *Herald* had played the tape of Teele’s conversation with DeFede for an assistant state attorney in a *Herald* conference room, which was certainly news to the *Herald* staff. Shortly thereafter, the *Herald* reported that it had allowed the tape to be played because DeFede had already turned over his notes. The whole dance seemed to be posturing, akin to the Cowardly Lion trying to act tough in Oz.

Tom Fiedler still has no regrets: “Jim crossed the bright white line of ethics, but I wouldn’t hesitate to recommend him for a job.” For a time, the DeFede revue was the star of *Romenesko*. On CNN’s *Reliable Sources*, Howard Kurtz, the media columnist for *The Washington Post*, took DeFede to task for being friendly enough with Teele to advise him on his legal troubles during that taped phone conversation, as well as asking Teele to go on record during an emotional breakdown when Teele

## WHAT DO THESE NINETEEN SCHOOLS SHARE?

Alabama, Arizona State, Auburn, Columbia, Connecticut, East Tennessee State, Kansas, Kansas State, Maryland, Michigan State, Missouri, Nebraska-Lincoln, Nebraska-Omaha, Notre Dame, Northwestern, Penn State, Pittsburgh, Syracuse, and Temple

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was close to tears. DeFede was judged to be both too soft and too heartless, at the same time.

In the days after DeFede's dismissal, several *Herald* columnists weighed in on the matter, defending one of their own. And Bob Norman of *New Times* did a piece about DeFede's past attacks against Tony Ridder in the *Herald* and *New Times*, suggesting that Ridder had retaliated against DeFede.

Norman's piece wound up on the *Herald's* internal online memo system, Read Me, which inspired Fiedler to issue a memo to the newsroom: "Tony Ridder is not only not fixated on Jim's status, he has never appeared to me to have been bothered by anything Jim has written in the past."

That may be the cold truth, real estate visionaries not being known for sweating the small stuff.

### 'HE JUST GOT CAUGHT'

Teele's suicide has been grist for a lot of mills, but the Sunday afternoon after his death belonged to his constituency, as thousands of mourners, gawkers, and protesters milled around the Richardson Mortuary in Liberty City for the wake. Teele's mother, Florazelle, his wife, Stephanie, and his son, Arthur, were on hand. DeFede had called the family for permission to attend — he has talked to Stephanie several times since Teele's death — but never made it, fearing, he says, that he might turn the proceedings into a "circus."

But he had written a piece for the *Miami Times*, a black community newspaper, finally getting a chance to use the transcript of the off-the-record tape: "In our conversation, Art made it clear he believed his reputation was destroyed. 'Do you know, if you Google me, the first thing that comes up?' he asked. 'The homosexual thing. You know what that did to me with the ministers and the church?'" From that sensitive issue about Teele, DeFede moved along to an appeal for help in getting his job back ("I love being a voice for those in this community who might not otherwise have an advocate") and to his recounting of the big night: "The lawyer, Robert Beatty, told me there could be some legal issues and concerns, which he outlined, but he said, 'The *Herald* will support you.' 'Absolutely, absolutely,' reiterated publisher Diaz."

Liberty City is north and west of the *Herald*, miles away from Biscayne Bay and pretty much forgotten. This is where the 1980 riots took place, and it will be a long time before the real estate boom of Miami comes to the forgotten heart of the black community. The stretch of Seventeenth Avenue before the funeral home unfolds as a reverie of indulgence and redemption, the earthly realm of pleasure in last-chance strip malls — the Three Fingers Lounge, Inner City Seafood ("You buy, we fry!"), DC Soul Food, and the Brothers of the Same Mind Restaurant and Laundromat ("Wash and Eat with

the Brothers") — breaking up a stream of churches in low-slung industrial buildings: Faith Mission God's Resurrection Church, Centurion Evangelistic Center, and the Refuge Church of Our Lord Jesus, bearing the sign "Hearts Speak When Words Can Not." Outside the modest funeral home, television news crews were lounging outside their trucks, sporadically filming a group of protesters waving placards ("Don't Buy the *Herald* . . . Don't Read the *New Times*") and three Bahamian junkanoo bands in gaudy costumes, prancing about and tearing into such unlikely selections as "Kumbaya." Next to the portable Chunky Conch stand, Ernestine Worthy, a community activist, was talking up the cause of protecting "welfare mothers and people with low-income jobs against greedy landlords. Art Teele was always very helpful. He wasn't doing anything that everyone else in this town doesn't do too. He just got caught."

Inside the funeral home, several rows of folding chairs were set up before the casket, with matrons in bright dresses furiously fanning themselves and singing along to the hymns. Along one wall was an array of lavish flower arrangements, bearing condolence cards from the Bay of Pigs Invasion Veterans, the Vietnam War Vets, the Liberty City Optimists Club, Jackson Soul Food, and Teele's old fraternity at Florida A&M University, Kappa Alpha Psi. The mourners were lined up along the flowers — Kappas in matching red jackets, Vietnam vets in fatigues and ponytails, dolled-up children in their Sunday best, random teenagers in *Scarface* T-shirts bearing cellphone cameras. One insensitive young man actually posed with the corpse for a grin-and-grip shot. The elderly lady in the next seat lent me her paper fan, adorned with a picture of a black Jesus holding a lamb. On the other side was an ad from The Keyes Company, Realtor Harriet Hawkins posing the eternal questions of Miami: Buying? Selling?

### 'YOU HAVE TO WONDER'

Thanksgiving weekend is the official start of high tourist season, the time when Miami renews itself and returns to the business of making money. Developers are pushing west into the Everglades and building taller and taller buildings, despite Wilma's toll, and every publication in Miami continues to be fed by condo ads. DeFede, a media beast to the end, has moved on to other muckraking pastures, doing commentary in Miami for AM 940 and the television station WFOR, a *Herald* media partner: "There was a big item in the *Herald* about it," he points out, "maybe you could put it in at the end of the story?"

In District 5, Teele's old turf, the Rev. Richard Dunn — an old Teele friend devoutly opposed to Crosswinds and given to picketing the *Herald* for its campaign coverage — was battling against

Michelle Spence-Jones, a former adviser on urban issues to Mayor Manny Diaz, part of the pro-development "concrete mafia." An unusual amount of pro-development money poured into Over-town, and in a late November runoff race, Spence-Jones won the election.

Jim Mullin, the *New Times* editor who had presided over the Teele story, was still smarting from one tough year. After nearly eighteen years at *New Times*, he'd lost the support of his superiors with the Teele story, and been replaced by Chuck Strouse. *New Times* would think twice about going out on a limb like that again and, unfortunately, the press in Miami might be less vigorous for a while after Teele: "The death of Art Teele was very hard and sobering," Mullin says. "I couldn't sleep for a week, but I also didn't think I'd be welcome at his viewing in Liberty City. That disturbing story, which was considered exploitive by so many people, crystallized everything the public despises about the media. Teele was a scoundrel but also the smartest politician we had here. It's almost as if his suicide was carefully premeditated, the way that DeFede lost his job, the editor of *New Times* is gone, and Tom Fiedler's professional reputation has suffered so much. You have to wonder who's next, where the next domino will fall."

Naturally, the *Herald* had made sure to cover the resignation of Mullin, who'd taken a risk and lost. In Miami, the *Herald* always wins. ■

*Tom Austin is a Miami-based writer and is working on a book about the development of the city. In the past, he has worked for, among other publications, The Miami Herald and Miami New Times.*

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Why journalism programs in high schools,  
especially poor ones, are collapsing  
— and how we can help

## THE NEXT GENERATION



CHRISTOPHER BARTH

BY KIERA BUTLER

**T**o a weary high school journalism adviser, the communications magnet program at Grady High School in Atlanta must seem like the Lake Wobegon of high school journalism, where “all of the children are above average.” The home of the highly decorated *Southerner* newspaper, a twenty-page monthly complete with a glossy bimonthly magazine pullout, the magnet program draws budding communicators from all over Atlanta. The front page of the September 2005

issue of *The Southerner* included a story about the Gaza pullout, a story about Grady graduates who had entered Tulane right before Hurricane Katrina struck, and a news brief about a Grady junior who had an article published in an academic journal of astrophysics. While some high school advisers find themselves issuing constant reminders that the world is bigger than homecoming, Dave Winter, the faculty adviser of *The Southerner*, says his staff itches to cover news beyond the Grady campus.

**DEADLINE:** Students at St. Benedict's Prep in Newark, New Jersey, prepare the next issue of *The Benedict News*.



Take Chelsea Spencer, a seventeen-year-old *Southerner* editor who has grown up listening to National Public Radio and whose friends sometimes call her a walking thesaurus. "Environmental controversies are kind of my specialty right now," Chelsea told me one day. Then she launched into an explanation of a story she's writing about the BeltLine, a proposed transit and neighborhood renovation in Atlanta: the class conflicts that will arise when developers are allowed to build new condos and push out low-income housing, the tax allocation plan that was recently passed, and her doubts about that allocation. "This guy I just interviewed who's running for city council," she says, looking deceptively naïve with freckles and long, brown hair, "his main concern is that we're not *actually* going to use that money to pay back for the BeltLine."

I met Chelsea and two other *Southerner* editors at the largest high school journalism convention in the United States. Cosponsored by the National Scholastic Press Association and the Journalism Education Association, the Fall National High School Journalism Convention takes place in a different major American city each year and draws young people who work on newspapers, magazines, high school radio and television stations, literary journals, and yearbooks. If an alien ship had landed at the convention, the visitors aboard might have come to the conclusion that on this planet we do nothing else *but* high school journalism. This year more than 5,000 teenagers took over the Grand Hyatt Regency Hotel in Chicago. Their slouching, giggling forms were everywhere — on the chairs and tables in the lobby, darting up and down the escalators, skulking around the concierge's desk, crowding into conference rooms for hundreds of workshops with titles that ranged from "Photoshop for Beginners" to "Homosexuality: So What's the Big Deal?"

Out of the sea of kids emerged some recognizable types: the snooty ones (one pony-tailed girl pronounced the hotel's revolving door "so ghetto" while applying her makeup in the lobby early on the first morning of the convention), the ones who giddily embraced their status as journalism nerds ("We suck at life, but we're great at journalism," read another girl's sweatshirt), and lots of high achievers. But most of the students were white, and after spending four days talking with them, it seemed pretty clear to me that most came from upper-middle-class communities. Many of them, Chelsea and the others from Grady High School included, had paid around \$500 in airfare, accommodations, and registration fees to attend. The convention's organizers are trying to increase racial and economic diversity at the yearly conventions — they offer scholarships to local groups. But a trip with this high a price tag would be hard to swing for an out-of-town student on a tight budget.

The prohibitive cost of the convention made the attendees a particularly uniform group. But considering that a 1997 study by the American Society of Newspaper Editors found that a quarter of journalists surveyed had already decided on a career in journalism by the time they were in high school, it's fair to speculate that journalism's low minority employment rate (last year, ASNE put the overall rate at newspapers at 13.4 percent) might not improve any time soon. Earlier this year, a Knight Foundation study called "The Future of the First Amendment" showed that 26 percent of the 544 high schools surveyed had no student newspaper. Of those schools without newspapers, 40 percent had lost them within the past five years. And 76 percent of schools without newspapers were urban or rural schools, those most likely to have high concentrations of poor students and students of color.

Chelsea and the other students on *The Southerner's* staff have witnessed the divide firsthand. At Grady High School, only the students in the communications magnet program, which is 34 percent African American, can be on the newspaper's staff. Students in the rest of the student body, which is 68 percent African American, have no newspaper of their own. The administrators of the magnet program are working to address this imbalance — they've recently launched a school-wide magazine, and Winter has allowed the occasional nonmagnet student to serve on staff — but for now, the disparity remains.

On the first day of the convention, teachers gathered in a small conference room for Outreach Academy, a workshop free to a select group of journalism advisers from high schools with high concentrations of minority students. "I think you'll see this weekend that this conference won't reflect your classroom," said Steve O'Donoghue, a former high school journalism adviser who has written about journalism education. "If you're a wealthy suburban school, sure, you'll go to Chicago. If not, you're maybe not coming here." He was right; only a handful of the advisers at the Outreach Academy had brought a group of students with them, and only one had brought students from outside the Chicago area.

In a presentation entitled "How to Survive Scholastic Journalism," O'Donoghue invoked the image of the adviser who, because his staff is so self-sufficient, can put his feet up on his desk and enjoy a cup of coffee while copy flow hums harmoniously around him. But as the conference wore on, it seemed that the dream of the idle adviser was far, far away. One teacher wondered how he could possibly get his group of middle school students to run their own newsroom when they were still learning how to use word processing software. Others bounced around ideas of how to offset the costs of

printing. These got pretty creative: one adviser had worked out a deal with Taco Bell that allowed her students to sell tacos during lunch and keep some of the profits. Most Outreach Academy advisers, it seemed, were constantly moving — scrounging for funding, thinking one step ahead of administrators, and working hard as hell to keep their students engaged and their programs afloat.

**A**lthough students in the communications program at Grady are required to take journalism, at the vast majority of high schools, if journalism is offered as a class at all, it's considered an elective. This can make it especially unattractive to kids in states where particular policies require students to load up on "basics" (English, math, history, and science, usually). If journalism teachers in California, for example, want their courses to fulfill admission requirements in the University of California system, they must go through a lengthy and opaque application process, and few students who are counting on in-state tuition discounts have the luxury of taking a class that doesn't count toward admission. Since 1998, when this policy went into effect, the number of students enrolled in journalism classes in California has decreased by 14 percent. At schools where journalism is an elective or an extracurricular activity, one of the most difficult tasks of the journalism adviser is to identify students with potential — and make journalism attractive to them.

Noreen Connolly, a tiny woman with red curls and lots of energy, is the faculty adviser of *The Benedict News*, the student newspaper of St. Benedict's Prep, a small parochial boys' school in Newark, New Jersey, that draws an ethnically diverse student body. On their own, most of Connolly's students' families would not have been able to afford a trip to the Chicago convention, but with financial help from the school's private donors, she was able to bring ten students. Among them was Wadner Brizeus, a seventeen-year-old senior and a rising star at *The Benedict News*. Last year, Connolly recruited Wadner to join the school newspaper after she heard him recite an interior monologue he had written based on a collage by the artist Romare Bearden. The collage, called "Tomorrow I May Be Far Away," shows a sharecropper with train tracks in the background, and Wadner imagined the man contemplating what his new life in the North might be like. "When I heard him read it, I thought, I've got to get this kid on the paper," said Connolly.

For most of his high school career, Wadner has focused on science. His sister told him that with his aptitude for chemistry, he could easily go into pharmacy someday and make a good living. "I never really considered journalism before," said Wadner. He still thinks he might study pharmacy, but in the past year, he has spent a lot of time reporting stories.

I met Wadner on the second day of the convention. The lobby was mobbed, so I sat on the floor by the concierge's desk with him and a classmate to talk. Wadner told me that he felt "a little out of place" among the mostly white kids from the suburbs. The son of Haitian immigrants, Wadner grew up working-class in Brooklyn and outside Newark. Earlier in the day, Wadner had seen, in a student paper from another high school, an editorial about the rapper Kanye West's post-Katrina "George Bush doesn't care about black people" comment. The editorial had defended Bush. "Where I'm from," Wadner said, "almost everyone thinks George Bush did a bad job. But where they're from, it's more like 'George Bush did all he could and Kanye should just shut up.'" He was more bemused than offended by this point of view, and said he and his St. Benedict's friends were glad to be meeting people with surprising tastes and opinions. Reflecting on last year's convention, one of Wadner's classmates told me, "I learned that you can be from a totally boring place — like *Kansas* — and still find something to write about."

Wadner, Connolly says, can be difficult. He's shy; he doesn't like to involve meddling adults in his life; he has a great capacity for brooding. On the second day of the convention, Wadner was mad at some of his friends because they had gone off to meet some girls without him. He barely spoke to them for a whole day. "In some ways, he's a volatile kid," says Connolly. "But he's also great at seeing through the bullshit." Right now, he's working on a story about gun control in Newark, and as he wades through police spokespeople, community activists, and others, a bullshit detector might come in handy.

Connolly knows a person with journalism potential when she sees one; she's been recruiting students since she transformed *The Benedict News* from a newsletter to a full-fledged newspaper in 1998. The first few years were the hardest. "I was so naive," says Connolly. "I didn't know anything about desktop publishing going into it, and I thought somehow it would all just magically come together."

Connolly was lucky in that the school provided some money to fund the paper and that she had colleagues who were, for the most part, supportive. But most advisers don't make it. According to the Journalism Education Association, the typical adviser lasts about three years. "High school advisers tend to feel isolated," says Diana Mitsu Klos, who heads ASNE's high school journalism initiative. Those who throw up their hands after a year or two, she says, are the ones who are trying to do it all on their own — learn layout programs, lobby for funding, and the rest. And many do all this on top of their "real" jobs; well-meaning principals have a way of tapping young English teachers for the assignment of starting up a student paper, often for little or no additional money.

Klos is working on programs aimed at both recruiting and keeping dedicated teachers. Each summer, ASNE brings more than 150 high school teachers to college campuses across the country for an all-expenses-paid, two-week course in journalism education. Those teachers who participate also receive subscriptions to journalism magazines and memberships in scholastic journalism associations. The summer program — and the memberships that come with it — help give advisers a sense that they are part of a community, which is crucial in getting them through their first few years of advising.

One of the ideas that got the Outreach Academy participants most excited was news about programs that partner professional journalists with high school students. Some of these programs come in the form of summer workshops; others allow students to shadow journalists. But St. Benedict's has taken advantage of one of the newest mentorship models. Last year, Connolly heard about an ASNE program that partners school newspapers with local dailies. The partnership program also came with a \$5,000 grant from the Knight Foundation. Since Connolly's application was accepted, *Star-Ledger* staff members have become a regular presence in her newsroom.

Partnership programs seem to work best when staff members work one-on-one with students, helping them hash out problems and find solutions. When Wadner was working on his gun control story, Connolly put him in touch with Barry Carter, a reporter at the *Star-Ledger* who had written about gun violence in Newark. Carter and Wadner exchanged ideas about the story over e-mail; Carter sent Wadner copies of the pieces he'd written and gave him contact information for a police officer and a local minister who had started an antigun coalition.

The downside of the partnership programs is that they require a spirit of volunteerism that many reporters are too busy to cultivate. But some believe that working with young

journalists pays off. Jeff Cohen, editor-in-chief of the *Houston Chronicle* and chairman of the ASNE High School Journalism Committee, sees mentoring as a necessity in this business. "If you believe in your responsibility to identify and mentor your successors," says Cohen, "these are investments in the future that have been shown to return big dividends." At the Outreach Academy, advisers seemed glad — relieved even — that professional journalists are slowly realizing that they must assume some of the burden of educating the next generation. If there were a slogan for this year's Outreach Academy — and for this age in journalism education in general, for that matter — it might be something like, "It Takes a Village to Raise a Journalist."

On the second-to-last day of the convention, the National Scholastic Press Association announced the winners of the esteemed Pacemaker prize, considered by many the Pulitzer of scholastic journalism. The *Southerner*, along with some two-dozen other truly impressive papers, won a Pacemaker in the newspaper category. Connolly had entered *The Benedict News* in the contest, and a few students had participated in a writing contest at the convention. But they didn't take home any prizes. The staff is disappointed, and so is Connolly. But she isn't surprised. Unlike the Grady kids, her students have not spent the past few years steeped in journalism. Many didn't even begin to read a daily newspaper until they started working on *The Benedict News*. She can't help feeling that she and her students are confronting a different set of obstacles. So she tells her students to concentrate on their successes. Pacemaker losses aside, the group came back from the convention with new skills and ideas. And the latest issue earned a rare note of congratulations from St. Benedict's headmaster. I spoke to Connolly a few days after the convention, but she couldn't talk long. "We're crazy around here right now," she said. "We're scrambling to get the paper out." ■

Kiera Butler is an assistant editor at CJR.

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**WHO'S NEXT?:** An FBI agent checks the wreckage after a car bomb killed Lebanese journalist Samir Kassir in June.



LETTER FROM BEIRUT

Syria is out, but a series of brutal attacks  
have left the proud Lebanese press  
looking over its shoulder

## THE COST OF FREEDOM

BY REBECCA SINDERBRAND

**N**abil Bou Monsef has a new daily commuting routine. As before, he leaves the house and gets into his car; but now, before he turns on his car radio, he searches under the driver's seat for bombs, checks to make sure he's not being followed, and then drives to work at *An-Nahar*, where he is the Lebanon news editor. He's not alone. Over the past few months, Bou Monsef's ritual has been adopted by hundreds of journalists across Lebanon. "This is the most dangerous time for reporters here, more than ever before. Even more than during the civil war," he says. "Because now journalists aren't just caught in the crossfire. Now we are being targeted ourselves."

It's been a bittersweet year for the Lebanese press. Many journalists here feel proud of the media's role in what's come to be known as "Beirut spring." On February 14, the former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was killed in a brutal bombing, and the weeks of peaceful protest against Syria that followed his assassination — along with consistent coverage by the country's media — are widely credited with play-

ing a significant role in Syria's decision to withdraw from Lebanon after roughly thirty years of occupation. Yet while the post-assassination liberation may have been surprisingly bloodless, the new freedom has proven decidedly more costly. Threats, intimidation, and targeted killings, widely believed to be by Syrian sympathizers, have dominated public life here — a trend that began before Hariri's killing and has only intensified. This orchestrated chaos has included a flurry of bombings that have killed and seriously injured journalists. Winter has arrived in Beirut, and spring has never seemed quite so far away.

Despite some government interference, and an arguable amount of self-censorship, Lebanese journalists I spoke with recently described the pre-withdrawal past with something approaching nostalgia. And justifiably so. Most of the press in the Arab world is state-run and hews to the party line, whatever it may be; in Lebanon, mostly hands-off private ownership, whatever the original political pedigree, has made for a far more freewheeling media environment. Moreover, with free-speech protections guaranteed by law, the relatively independent

Lebanese press managed to span the political spectrum, even under Syrian domination, making it the envy of the region.

The past wasn't all scoops and sunshine. Just as in many of its less press-friendly neighbors, criticism of the wrong people in Lebanon has always brought serious consequences, legal and otherwise. The same Lebanese constitution that guarantees press freedom also forbids the media from slandering or defaming the president. Indeed, in July 2003 the Lebanese government started legal proceedings against the journalist Amer Mash-

It began to be whispered that there was a 'blacklist' of political leaders and journalists who were to be systematically eliminated.

moushi, accusing him of insulting President Emile Lahoud in an article published in the Beirut daily *Al-Liwa*, a charge that carried the risk of up to two years' imprisonment. And in December 2003, the owner of New TV (NTV), Tahsin Khayat, was arrested for "suspected links" with Israel and for "undermining Lebanon's relations with friendly countries." He was eventually released, but soon after, a searing broadcast about the head of Syrian military intelligence in Lebanon earned his station a government-mandated forty-eight-hour ban on political programming.

Still, the freewheeling spirit of Beirut's dailies — from the left-wing *As-Safir* to the more centrist stalwart *An-Nabbar* — makes them popular reads throughout the Middle East. Even under Syrian scrutiny, Lebanese newspapers led the Arab world in hard-hitting investigative journalism; crusading columnists openly called for politicians' resignations, and for Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon. In recent years, the columnist Samir Kassir of *An-Nabbar* led the pack; his 2001 column, WHO ARE YOU A SOLDIER AGAINST?, blasted the military and intelligence forces for misusing their power to restrain free speech and political activism, a subject he returned to time and again. Others, including Joseph Samaha of *As-Safir*, took regular aim at corruption and hypocrisy within the political establishment, and openly named military figures suspected of doing Damascus's bidding.

But now certain topics have become taboo. Some journalists and observers say that much of

the serious investigation into the trail of financial support and logistical links between the Assad regime in Damascus, the remaining pro-Syrian elements within the Lebanese security apparatus, and the Hezbollah organization operating out of Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps, ended after Rafik Hariri was killed. The risks involved in reporting those stories, they say, are danger enough — actually publishing them in the current environment seems likely to seal a journalist's own death warrant.

Even in a city renowned for brashness and style, Samir Kassir stood out. He was known for his blunt denunciation of Damascus and for the Gauloise cigarettes he smoked constantly. He earned his chops with the generation of Lebanese journalists who reported on the civil war that began in 1975, when the city once called the "Paris of the Middle East" dissolved into a maelstrom of bloodlust and conflicting loyalties. Erudite and charming, he cut a charismatic figure. Several friends describe him as a "soldier," because "he always had a mission."

By late 2004, his overriding mission was chronicling the orchestrated campaign of intimidation and violence aimed at Lebanon's elite. As reporters here describe it, the cycle began in earnest last year as fallout from the bitter battle between President Lahoud and the increasingly independent Prime Minister Hariri. Forces sympathetic to Syria had a longstanding policy of intimidation aimed at outspoken public figures. This policy began to grow increasingly bold, eventually edging into murder. Four years ago, around the time he wrote his memorable broadside against some elements of the nation's security forces, Kassir had his Lebanese passport taken away by the government. With the new escalation, agents started trailing him openly, even during daylight hours. For Kassir, friends say, it eventually became a sort of grim joke. During one afternoon café visit, he reportedly told the establishment's owner he'd pick up the check for the man following him as well.

On the morning of June 2, 2005, days after one final column denouncing Syria's rulers for ignoring dissenting viewpoints, Kassir was blown apart by a small car bomb placed under the driver's seat of his silver Alfa Romeo, just yards from his home in Beirut's Christian neighborhood of Ashrafiyyeh. The effect on the press was immediate and devastating. "They chose a very successful target, from their perspective," says Mohammed Mattar, Kassir's friend and lawyer who is now representing Kassir's widow, the *al-Arabiya* journalist Gisele Khoury. "His death has left a huge vacuum. There's no replacement for him for some time to come. For now, everyone is in danger."

Kassir's murder followed a grotesquely familiar pattern. The explosion was scientific in its precision, leaving no doubt about who'd been targeted. A previously unknown group claimed responsibility for the murder, threatening further attacks against Syrian critics. It began to be whispered among leading Lebanese that there was a "black list" circulating, a roll call of prominent political leaders and journalists who were to be systematically eliminated.

The United States, France, and the United Nations all immediately denounced Kassir's killing. Opposition leaders demanded Lahoud's resignation and called for a general strike to protest the murder. In Beirut's Martyrs' Square, hundreds of journalists gathered and defiantly held pens aloft in a silent celebration of press freedom. The gesture was short-lived. Soon after Kassir's death, word of a threat from Syrian-backed forces sent Kassir's boss, Gebran Tueni, *An-Nabbar's* publisher and a newly elected member of parliament, fleeing the country for Paris. Tueni joined a mini-exodus of leading press figures seeking safety overseas, in a trend reminiscent of the dark civil war days. Months later, *An-Nabbar*, along with dozens of other media outlets, remains in lockdown mode, still adjusting to the new state of siege.

Michael Young, the opinion-page editor of the English-language *Daily Star*, worries that the significance of Kassir's death was missed by the world beyond Beirut. "At his funeral, I was sad, but mostly I was angry. I thought to myself, this is an essential moment," says Young, sitting in the fashionable Water Lemon cafe just a few blocks from the bombing site. "Looking back now, I think he went very cheaply. If his death led to some new breakthrough, perhaps there would be some solace. But so far, his death has just been followed by more death."

**A**n-Nabbar is the oldest currently published paper in Beirut and one of the most widely respected dailies in the Arab world. Every day, around a hundred journalists report for work at a stylish building on the edge of the city's rejuvenated downtown district, a renewal project that was spearheaded by Hariri in the 1990s and has since become a major source of his lingering mystique — a fragile but hopeful symbol of the city's rebirth.

The sun is setting over the Mediterranean on a rainy November evening, but the day is just beginning for Nabil Bou Monsef, the paper's veteran Lebanon editor. It has been just a few days since Detlev Mehliis, sent by the UN to investigate the Hariri assassination, issued a preliminary report pointing a finger at the Syrian leadership. Despite the Eid holiday that marks the end of the month-long Ramadan fast, the newsroom outside

Bou Monsef's glass-walled office hums with activity. "The older reporters here, like me, lived through the civil war," he says wearily. "So this fear is not completely foreign to us. The mood of young journalists who didn't have this experience, yes, they are afraid. It seems now is their time to suffer."

Some reporters, particularly those with families, are growing reluctant to take reporting risks. Once again there are invisible redlines on Lebanon's map, as nervous journalists seek to minimize or avoid traveling to or reporting on certain areas. Not unlike during the civil war, the no-go zones are at times determined by sectarian allegiance. For instance, some Christian reporters say they are hesitant to spend extended periods in the Bekaa Valley, which serves as a base for the Syrian-backed Hezbollah militia. Other boundaries are nearly universal — for instance, it's difficult to find many correspondents willing to venture repeatedly into the notorious Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp. Some reporters, worn down by a year of stress with no end in sight, have started to talk openly of leaving the business altogether.

Still, the weeks-long lull following the Chidiac attack had some journalists hopeful that the violence had ended. But for the columnist Joseph Samaha, it was merely the end of the beginning. "I am a pessimist. I think that Lebanon is not coming out of a crisis. I think we are going into crisis," he says, as he puffs on his third cigarette in less than ten minutes. It's the tail end of the Eid holiday, and he's ensconced at a table at the Star Café in downtown Beirut. "The situation in Syria is very much unresolved. I am fully expecting the other shoe to drop."

**A**fter Samir Kassir's murder, massive security cordons sprang up around the headquarters of the country's major media organizations. Government patrols joined armed guards and bomb-sniffing dogs, creating a sense of siege as daily reports of near misses and rumors of thwarted attacks kept reporters on edge. In September, for instance, Ali Ramez Tohme, a journalist and author of a pro-Hariri book, was the target of a car bomb that exploded under his driver's seat when he wasn't there. Still, with all of this new scrutiny, it was assumed no one would be able to reach another media luminary. Until someone did.

The Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) is the most popular television channel in Lebanon and, after Al-Jazeera, the second-most-watched channel in the Middle East. Originally created by local Christian militia forces, the network devotes a large share of its resources to serving the needs of the Lebanese diaspora: the educated elite, particularly Christian, that has been steadily bleeding away over three decades of civil war and economic upheaval. Broadcasting from LBC head-



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quarters in the Beirut suburb of Adma, the journalist May Chidiac was a regular presence in living rooms in Lebanon and abroad for the past twenty years. The immensely popular host cushioned tough questions with the on-screen persona of a Lebanese Diane Sawyer: Blond. Polished. Trustworthy.

The last week in September, just days after the Tohme near-miss, Chidiac hosted a program exploring Syria's involvement in the death of Rafik Hariri, and public fears of further violence. Sometime between her last shift at LBC and a leisurely brunch at a nearby friend's house, someone placed an explosive charge under the driver's seat of her Range Rover. The force of the explosion, which left the hood of her car dangling from a tree some thirty feet away, critically wounded Chidiac, who lost her left arm and leg. She remains in the hospital, still trying to make sense of the events of that morning. "Every day, May asks, 'Why me?'" says her fellow LBC reporter Dolly Ghanem. "I tell her it is a message from those who want to control us. They are saying, 'You may think you have control. But do not think you are getting free so easily.'"

Again, Beirut's journalists gathered in protest. This time, they were not silent. "I promise May that my voice is hers and my arm is hers and my leg is hers until she comes back to us," an anguished Ghanem told a gathering in Beirut shortly after the attack. "No one can terrorize the freedom of expression in the country," a flustered but insistent Information Minister Ghazi Aridi told the *Daily Star*. "It is our responsibility to protect the Lebanese media . . . We believe that the word can protect us. By arming ourselves with the free and conscious word we can provide ourselves with a small measure of protection."

But one can't block bullets with broadsheets, and many leading media figures now find it increasingly difficult to pull off high-wire reporting. "They are targeting the opinion makers," says Chidiac's boss, LBC's chief executive officer, Pierre Daher. "That stays in the back of your mind, no matter how hard you try. You think, this word, this sentence, this picture — will it mean death threats? You'd like to think it won't change how you do your job. But people here at LBC are on the forefront. Of course they are nervous." There is no grand gesture of capitulation. Instead, there's an immeasurable rise in sins of omission — leads not followed, angles not pursued. Wajed Ramadan, a young French-language reporter who works for Future TV, the LBC's crosstown counterpart, shares Daher's sentiments. "Even with the security, you don't feel secure," she said. "You worry about how people you cover will react to your stories. Some of them have guns, and some of them have bombs. All May Chidiac did was ask questions — that is all. So you see the price for questioning some people is very high." (During the last weekend of November, Chidiac appeared briefly on LBC for the first time since the attack. She discussed the incident, and promised to return to work as soon as her prosthetic limbs are ready.)

For Ramadan and her colleagues, safety is now the X-factor in all editorial decisions. It's a complex, highly personal calculation, with one unavoidable metric: when visibility equals risk, invisibility is no longer a career-killer to be avoided — it's a life-saver to be embraced. Speaking against Syrian domination, especially given the current climate, remains a badge of honor, but untangling the web of links between members of the Lebanese elite and the infrastructure of Syrian occupation remains lonely, dangerous work.



During the last three years, Lebanon has plummeted fifty-two spots — to 108th out of 167 countries — on the global index of press freedom produced annually by Reporters Sans Frontières. “Journalists are still able to speak more freely than in other Arab countries,” says Lynn Tehini, who heads RSF’s Middle East and North Africa desk. “It’s the deteriorating security situation that has affected their ability to work . . . Of course, because of this, there are stories that are not being pursued.” The *Daily Star*’s Michael Young concurs. “There’s no doubt that through these attacks, there is a message being sent to the Lebanese press. They’re trying to create a climate of fear that will impact our coverage.” Even those who continue to speak bluntly now think twice before launching investigations into sensitive subjects like Hezbollah.

The lack of resolution surrounding the attacks maintains the climate of fear; no one has yet been charged with ordering any of the press attacks or intimidation of the past few months. The anxiety level among reporters after a year under fire is matched by the acknowledged helplessness of government officials. According to the *Daily Star*, Information Minister Aridi told worried reporters meeting to discuss security issues shortly after the Chidiac bombing, “There will perhaps be more prices to pay, and more sacrifices to be made. But that, unfortunately, is the fate of all Lebanese journalists.”

Indeed, on December 12, the same day that Detlev Mehlis released his final report on Rafik Hariri’s assassination, Gebran Tueni, *An-Nahar*’s outspoken publisher, became the latest journalist to pay the ultimate price when he was killed by a massive car bomb as he drove to work the day after he had returned from Paris.

Overwhelmed officials, citing a lack of crime-fighting technology and expertise, have asked for foreign help to end the carnage. Chidiac’s case, for instance, is now being investigated with help from the FBI. Samir Kassir held dual citizenship with France, so the French have launched their own inquiry into his death, assigning veteran terror prosecutor Jean-Louis Bruguiere to head that investigation. The Committee to Protect Journalists sent an open letter to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan shortly before the release of the first Mehlis report this fall, pleading with him to include press attacks in that team’s mandate. After Tueni was killed, Marwan Hamade, Lebanon’s telecommunications minister and Tueni’s uncle, threatened to resign if the government did not demand an immediate UN investigation. Within days, the UN announced that it would provide technical assistance to Lebanese investigators.

Still, the continuing inability of Lebanon’s own government to impose order on the situation remains a major source of frustration. “Nobody is defending journalists,” says Nabil Bou Monsef, bluntly. “In this chaos, people are getting killed. It is not clear how long this will last. I’m sure it will end soon.”

“Why?” I ask.

“Because it must,” he says quietly.

But given the pall hanging over the country after Gebran Tueni’s death, it’s hard to dismiss Joseph Samaha’s darker assessment of the reality facing Lebanon’s journalists. “Maybe sometime in the years to come, if there is not another civil war, then we will have calm in Lebanon and Syria. But I cannot see that day right now.” ■

*Rebecca Sinderbrand has written from the Middle East for Newsweek, Slate, Salon, and other publications.*

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# IDEAS & REVIEWS

## ESSAY



BORIS KULIKOV

## Cultivating Loneliness

The importance of slipping away from the pack to encounter, and understand, the world firsthand

BY ROBERT D. KAPLAN

**K**nowing the future is easy, if only we were willing to see the present. In the 1980s, it was one thing to learn about Afghanistan through fleeting and sporadic news reports; it was another to watch with a relative handful of journalists as Soviet planes and land mines killed ten times more Afghans than all the people killed in Lebanon — a war with which the major news organizations were then obsessed. It was one thing to watch

CNN live as the Berlin Wall fell; it was another to hear about it in the then-Yugoslavia, a few hours after watching Albanians throw bottles at Serbian police. It was one thing to hear from academics in the early 1990s about post-cold-war Africa's encouraging prospects; it was another to spend a day in Conakry, Guinea, searching for a photocopy machine that worked. The most dangerous thing a writer can do sometimes is to describe what he sees in front of his face, for

the very ideals and assumptions that many of us live by are dependent upon maintaining a comfortable distance from the evidence.

The Internet now makes facts so effortless to obtain that there is the illusion of knowledge where none actually exists. With so many low-budget Web logs that do little more than emotionally react to the headlines, rare is the commentator who does the field work necessary to earn his opinions — or even his prejudices. And as punditry has crowded out the space once owned by print correspondents, the public is increasingly removed from the intangible essences and minutiae of distant places that explain the present, and thus forewarn of the future.

Above all, it is the lack of appreciation for geography in the broad, nineteenth-century sense of the word that is basic to an age of journalism increasingly given to summarizing from above rather than reporting from below. Good foreign correspondents in the print media are obvious exceptions to this rule. The *New York Times* correspondents Stephen Kinzer and Barry Bearak — the former writing from Turkey and Central Asia, the latter from Afghanistan and the Indian subcontinent, both in the late-1990s — come to mind for their vivid attention to local history and culture. And of course there are others. But such journalists constitute a mere handful among an ever-growing horde of self-proclaimed experts and generalizers who fill televised panels and print columns without ever having filled up a reporter's notebook.

Barry Lopez, the nature writer, notes that in the current climate even such a seemingly obvious notion as the American landscape is a concoction of the media and advertising industries: in truth, the American landscape is a product of many little landscapes, each with its local genius, so that only the ignorant would reduce "the

Triassic reds of the Colorado Plateau . . . the sharp and ghostly light of the Florida Keys . . . and the aeolian soils of southern Minnesota" to a single geography. The valleys of Kentucky and West Virginia, Lopez goes on, should never be interchangeable; nor should the Green River in Utah and the Salmon River in Idaho. Contemporary journalism veers toward the very sort of canned assumptions and mediocre generalizations that Lopez abjures.

Journalism desperately needs a return to *terrain*, to the kind of firsthand, solitary discovery of local knowledge best associated with old-fashioned travel writing. Travel writing is more important than ever as a means to reveal the

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vivid reality of places that get lost in the elevator music of 24-hour media reports. In and of itself, travel writing is a low-rent occupation, best suited for the Sunday supplements. But it is also a deft vehicle for filling the void in serious journalism: for example, by rescuing such subjects as art, history, geography, and statecraft from the jargon and obscurantism of academia, for the best travel books have always been about something else. Mary McCarthy's *The Stones of Florence* (1959) and Robert Byron's *The Station* (1928) deal with the art of the Renaissance and the Byzantine empire respectively. Winston Churchill's *The River War* (1899) and T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wis-*

*dom* (1926) employ both the experience of travel and the study of geography to explore warfare and statecraft in late nineteenth-century Sudan in Churchill's case, and the techniques of guerrilla insurgency in Lawrence's. Owen Lattimore's *The Desert Road to Turkestan* (1929) is on one level about the organization of camel caravans, and on another about Russian and Chinese imperial ambitions. Freya Stark's *The Southern Gates of Arabia* (1936) is as good a depiction of Osama bin Laden's tribal homeland of eastern Yemen as any you'll find.

To wit, Stark writes of still-surviving caravan routes that obliterate borders, and of merchants in eastern Yemen who, "after a life of money-making, retire to an old age of guerrilla warfare in their valley." Thus she is skeptical about whether the human race yearns for peace as much as it claims. For what people really believe — contrary to what they often tell journalists — takes time and effort to find out. She quotes a Yemeni who advises that while it is good to speak the truth, "it is better to know the truth and speak of palm trees." Because the world is full of such men, Owen Lattimore, while traveling in Inner Mongolia, makes an observation that all journalists should take to heart:

There is nothing that shuts off the speech of simple men like the suspicion that they are being pumped for information: while if they get over the feeling of strangeness they will yarn as they do among themselves. Then in their talk there comes out the rich rough ore of what they themselves accept as the truth about their lives and beliefs, not spoiled in trying to refine it unskillfully by suiting the words to the listener.

Just listening to people, to their stories — rather than cutting them off to ask probing, impolite questions — forms the essence of these

## ESSAY

## IDEAS &amp; REVIEWS

and all other good travel books. I learned this over two decades ago while trying to interview a refugee in Greece who had just escaped from Stalinist Albania. I had a list of questions to ask this refugee, but instead he preferred to tell me the story of his life. It was only after listening to him for several hours that the information I sought began to slip out.

But such a leisurely approach goes against the grain of journalism as it is commonly practiced. Reporting emphasizes the intrusive, tape-recorded interview; travel writing emphasizes the art of good conversation, and the experience of how it comes about in the first place. It has long been a cliché among correspondents that in Africa 10 percent of journalism is doing interviews, and 90 percent is the hassles and adventures of arranging them. But while the former fits within the narrow strictures of daily news articles, it is the latter that tells you so much more about the continent.

The travel writer knows that people are least themselves when being tape-recorded. You'll never truly understand anybody by asking a direct question, especially someone you don't know very well. Rather than interrogate strangers, which is essentially what reporters do, the travel writer gets to know people, and reveals them as they reveal themselves. After being with a battalion of marines for several weeks in Iraq, I noticed that they suddenly stopped using profane language when some journalists arrived and turned on their tape recorders. Whatever the marines were in front of the journalists, they were less real than they had been before.

Travel writing emphasizes solitariness. The best writing, literary or journalistic, occurs under the

loneliest of circumstances, when a writer encounters the evidence firsthand without anyone of his social, economic, or professional group nearby to help him filter it, or otherwise condition his opinions. William Faulkner's works, according to Malcolm Cowley, "are the books of a man who broods about literature, but doesn't often discuss it with his friends; there is no ease about them, no feeling that they come from a background of taste refined by ar-

Rather than interrogate strangers, which is essentially what reporters do, the travel writer gets to know people, and reveals them as they reveal themselves.

gument and of opinions held in common." Officially, journalism encourages such independence of thought and experience. But while travel writing demands both a horizontal journey to another geographical space and a vertical journey outside of one's own subculture of some duration, working journalists — having evolved into a professional caste — are subtly expected to do the opposite. They move from one seminar and conference and dinner gathering to the next, a pattern that promotes uniformity rather than diversity of outlook. Even when abroad, reporters are most comfortable hanging out together. They go to the same hotel bars and restaurants to such a degree that these places become emblematic of a particular era in reporting: famously the Commodore Hotel bar in Beirut in the 1980s. This engen-

ders fond reminiscences, but not a variety of experience.

The best travel writing prepares you for what a place is really like, and consequently gives the reader who will never travel there an accurate ground-level portrait of it. Colin Thubron's *In Siberia* (1999) provides a much more vibrant picture of the dissolution of rural Russia after the collapse of communism and the advent of Boris Yeltsin's cold-turkey democracy than the Moscow-centric reporting in the most prestigious newspapers of the period. If one wants to know about how sub-Saharan Africa is actually doing, forget the newspapers and read Paul Theroux's *Dark Star Safari* (2003), which demonstrates how finely wrought observations of people and landscapes offer the best kind of political and social analysis. Theroux describes bus and train stops, lawless borderlands, and urban nightmares, as well as individual beauty, honesty, and friendliness. Whatever the prejudices of Theroux and Thubron, at least they are the result of direct contact with the evidence — uncontaminated by contact with a clerisy of specialists, clustered in nearby foreign capitals. As Jack London put it, "They drew straight from the source, rejecting the material which filtered through other hands."

Journalists belong to a policy elite that is fixated with politics to the exclusion of much else that goes on at home and abroad. Thus, when they arrive overseas they gravitate toward movers and shakers in foreign capitals who have similar fixations. For example, overseas reporters exhibit an obsession with covering elections. But because democracy has less to do with elections than with the building of institutions — a slow process that rarely translates into news events — a region like Africa would remain largely a blank were it not for travel books. Many dis-



patches counter this trend, but it is the trend that I am talking about, not the exceptions.

Travel books convey what is truly important about a society. Take Terence O'Donnell's *Garden of the Brave in War* (1980) about Iran, in which he observes that in Farsi there is no word for either a romantic or a realist: "No Iranian would so limit his sense of the world by being one or the other." The Puritanism of the ayatollahs, he further intimates, has been a reaction to the fact that deep down Iranians are all voluptuaries. Foreign correspondents, it is true, do write about this stuff — in books, for which they often have to take leaves of absence.

If anyone deserves a public service award for peeling back the curtain on distant societies, it is the publishers of major newspapers and magazines than those of the *Lonely Planet Guides* and *The Rough Guides*. These two series combine historical and cultural depth with intrepid, solitary research by young travelers who get to every remote location in a given country; and in the course of informing the reader about where to stay and where to eat, say much about public health, crime, the economy, and politics in a society. In the 1990s, when it was particularly hard to get visas to Iran — and much of the information about that country emerged out of seminars in Washington — the best thing to read on the subject was *Iran: A Travel Survival Kit* by David St. Vincent, published in the Lonely Planet series.

What these guidebooks offer above all is geographical context, which is too often lacking in contemporary journalism. For example, how many people know that Abu Ghraib is not just a prison, but also a town west of Baghdad, with some of the worst random crime in Iraq? And that only part of the facility is used as a prison; the other part is a mil-

itary base for, among other things, patrolling the crime-ridden area? How many know that one reason behind much of the violence in the Abu Ghraib-Fallujah area is its location to the west of Baghdad on the millennia-old trade route to Syria, thus encouraging a tendency for independence and smuggling?

Neither journalism nor travel writing are real subjects. Rather, they are only a means for communicating subjects that are real. Travel writers are increasingly aware of this, as travel books become a mechanism to explore everything from politics to wine, to archaeology, to the origin of color even: Victoria Finlay's *Color: A Natural History of the Palette* (2002) is a marvelously innovative travel book. However, journalists have gone in the other direction, increasingly concerned about their own nonfield, with the press writing, studying, and in general fixated more and more on itself.

Reporting — one of history's oldest professions, even as it has gone under different names — will survive and prosper, while "journalism" as a respected discipline threatens to dissolve into another branch of the entertainment industry. How will good reporting survive? Individual men and women will slip away from the crowd — away from the panels and seminars, the courses and conferences, away from the writers' hangouts and e-mail networks — to cultivate loneliness. They will demand of themselves not to write a word about a place or a subject until they know it firsthand. And they will do this out of curiosity — for as the illusion of knowledge grows daily, the reality of places themselves becomes more of a mystery. ■

*Robert D. Kaplan is a correspondent for The Atlantic Monthly. He is the author of eleven books on travel and foreign affairs, most recently Imperial Grunts: The American Military on the Ground.*

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## SECOND READ

## BACKSTAGE MAN

TED CONOVER ON STANLEY BOOTH'S *THE TRUE ADVENTURES OF THE ROLLING STONES* AND THE NEED TO TAKE RISKS AS A WRITER



PHOTOGRAPH © ETHAN RUSSELL 1968-2005

In 1984, when I was beginning my book *Coyotes*, my editor at Random House handed me a brand-new book about the Rolling Stones that he said was very, very good. The editor, David Rosenthal, had just come to the book business from *Rolling Stone* magazine and so, I figured, knew what he was talking about. I browsed *Dance With the Devil: The Rolling Stones & Their Times*, by Stanley Booth, noticing that much of it took place in 1969, during a tour of the United States that ended with the infamous Al-

tamont concert in California. "Why's it only coming out now?" I asked Rosenthal, who grimaced. "Long story," he said, and never told it to me.

I do not read many books about music, but this one drew me in. Part of the reason was that Booth's

**We talk of books standing the test of time. SECOND READ is an exploration of that maxim — journalists reflecting on books that shaped their own work, or whose lessons remain relevant.**

#### BOOTH WITH KEITH RICHARDS, 1968

style of research with the famous rock group seemed similar to what I had in mind with Mexican migrants: participate and immerse rather than simply interview and observe. Yes, the Rolling Stones on tour led a life different in most respects from that of people sneaking into the United States, but there were similarities (young men traveling in a group, young men working but also having an adventure, young men breaking

laws, young men staying up late and getting blasted, etc.). The other reason was that, as I soon discovered, *Dance with the Devil* is a treasure of participatory journalism, a book with something good on practically every page.

It was also a book suited to the disjointed way in which I was living at the time. *Dance with the Devil*, in other words, though mainly about a tour, digresses frequently and does not impel you breathlessly toward the end. So I could read it in little pieces, a few pages here and a few pages there; unlike most books that I don't plunge into, I kept it around. Maybe because those early days were also a time when I often found myself stuck in writing, too self-critical and unable to find the words, Booth's book also came to hold a sort of magic for me, the power to break a dam and start a flow. Which is more, somehow, than I can say for most books I admire.

The hardcover edition didn't sell and so the paperback was retitled (in the way the author had always wanted): *The True Adventures of the Rolling Stones*. But that didn't help sales either and both editions soon fell out of print. In 2000, however, *True Adventures* got a new life when it was republished by Chicago's A Cappella Press. Blurbs on the cover, I was delighted to see, showed that it had found other admirers. "The one authentic masterpiece of rock 'n' roll writing," raved Peter Guralnick, a writer not given to hyperbole (or blurbs, for that matter). There was a new afterword, too, so I picked up a copy and read the book again.

*True Adventures* begins in a way that gives readers a taste of what they're in for, and foreshadows the disaster to come. Six strange paragraphs in italics, a kind of prologue, describe Mick and Keith's nighttime reconnoiter of the coming evening's venue, the Altamont Speedway east of San Francisco, where they would give a long-awaited free concert:

It is late. All the little snakes are asleep. The world is black outside the car windows, just the dusty clay road in the headlights. Far from the city, past the last crossroads (where they used to bury suicides in England, with wooden stakes driven through their hearts), we are looking for a strange California hillside where we may see him, may even dance with him in his torn, bloody skins, come and play.

Inside the band's limo, The Crystals are on the radio singing "He's a Rebel." Outside, people waiting for the gates to open are everywhere, with their dogs, packs, and sleeping bags. The driver doesn't know where to go but finally arrives at a fence. "So we stand on one foot

## Booth involved himself fully not in just a band tour but in the passions of a generation.

and then the other, swearing in the cold, and no one comes to let us in, and the gate, which is leaning, rattles when I shake it, and I say we could push it down pretty easy, and Keith says, 'The first act of violence.'"

The story of the free concert, which is well known, ends the book: as the Stones play the next night, the Hell's Angels, acting as security, will kill a black man, and beat others. Altamont is considered by many to be the calamity that began the eclipse of the Age of Aquarius. Ending the italicized section is a cartoon panel with the title, "J.P. Alley: Hambone's Meditations." The black man pictured in it, leading a mule, is saying "O, lock up de do' en set down yo' load — hones' folks asleep en de debil on de road!"

It's the only drawing in the book and, with its racist dialect, its presence seemed strange — until I discovered that "Hambone's Meditations" was until 1968 a regular feature of the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*. Then I saw how it ties together three important elements of

Booth's project: Memphis, where he began his career writing about the blues (he is originally from Georgia), the Stones's satanism, and black people (and their music and their rhymes) as depicted by white people. Because what apparently drew Booth to the Stones was music: they were set apart from most other acts by their interest in and adoption of the blues, and Booth's association with that music, and the South, seem to have been a reason they agreed to let him chronicle their tour.

That chronicling gets under way after passages about the formation of the Stones, their rise to popularity in Britain, and the death of the guitarist Brian Jones, apparently from a drug overdose. Booth also recreates early meetings with

the Stones and their managers, repeatedly sharing his anxiety over whether the arrangement will work out, whether he'll have a deal signed before the tour begins. As Booth tells it, what probably clinches the deal is when Jagger asks him:

"What would your book be about?"

"About?"

"You know, what would be in it?"

"What will be in your next song?"

"A girl in a barroom, man, I don't know. It's much easier to write a song than a book," says Jagger . . .

I told Mick that I had written a story about a blues singer who had swept the streets in Memphis for more than forty years, but he's more than just a street sweeper, because he's never stopped playing, if you see what I mean. I didn't look at Mick to find out whether he saw. You write, I told him, about things that move your heart, and in the story about the old blues singer I wrote about where he lives and the songs he

sings and just lists of the things he swept up in the streets, and I can't explain to him, Furry Lewis, what it is about him that moves my heart, and I can't tell you what I would write about the Rolling Stones, and so, well, I guess I can't answer your question. No, he said, you answered it, and for the first time since I thought, long months ago, of writing this book, I felt almost good about it.

It's when the tour begins, in the book's middle section, that the ship leaves the shore and Booth finds his pace. He is with the band during rehearsals, at arena gigs, and inside recording sessions, cars, private jets, hotel suites and house parties with a changing cast of groupies, handlers, cops, and other musicians. Booth has said in an interview that "I wanted to write a book that readers could walk around in and know what it was like to be in London in 1968 or America in 1969," and he works hard to capture the texture of the times.

He is strongest when writing about the music — the history of it, the business of it, and the experience of it. Booth's believer's passion results in all sorts of luminous insights into the enterprise: "The Stones's show was not a concert but a ritual; their songs . . . were acts of violence, brief and incandescent." And later, "Making love and death into songs was exactly the Stones's business." Booth tells a story in which "Each night we went someplace new and strange and yet similar to the place before, to hear the same men play the same songs to kids who all looked the same, and yet each night it was different, each night told us more." He suggests that "In the sixties we believed in a myth — that music had the power to change people's lives. Today people believe in a myth — that music is just entertainment." He writes about what it was like backstage and what it was like in the audience, what it felt like when things really clicked and what it was like when they did not.

The backstage view is, of course, the main draw to a book like this, and Booth offers anecdotes intriguing, disgusting, and amusing. He writes about a comely woman in the studio audience during the taping of the *The Ed Sullivan Show* who does not succeed in getting taken advantage of: a minion picks a "big blond in buckskin" to visit the boys backstage instead. Booth writes of leaving the studio with a friend, "the pretty little girl in the brown outfit ahead of us, smiling, lucky to be left with her dreams." He reports on how, a couple of days after a recording session, the Stones "made more money than they had ever made in one day by recording a television commercial for Rice Krispies . . ." In one particularly delightful scene, Booth describes Jagger on his hotel bed after a concert, exhausted, eating Chinese food, and taking flack from others for his smelly socks:

Mick drew his feet up under him . . . and began talking to me about the future, where to live, what to do . . . "I've got to find a place to live, got to think about the future, because obviously I can't do *this* forever." He rolled his eyes. "I mean, we're so old — we've been going on for eight years and we can't go on for another eight. I mean, if you can you will do, but I just can't, I mean we're so old — Bill's *thirty-three*."

Sometimes there's just pleasure in the writerly risks Booth takes, and seeing how they pay off. Toward the end of the tour, he describes waking up at the Plaza Hotel in New York "still anesthetized by the heroin." His friend, Gore, "being like all speed freaks evangelistic," takes him to a "speed doctor," who gives them shots in the butt of something restorative for ten dollars apiece.

Booth then writes:

I had felt faint and limp-wristed, but with the charge in my ass I decided we didn't need a cab, we

could walk across town to Madison Square Garden for the Stones's afternoon concert. Out of an earnest desire not to rob this account of its true interest, I will confess that I was carrying the red carnation from my bedside table at the Plaza; so there I went, boots, jeans, and leather jacket, sniffing a long-stemmed red carnation, looking like some insane faggot ought to be kilt with a shovel, as we walked briskly through the streets, fatigue gone, feeling ardent.

What Booth captures so well is the particular energy of the time. The style is sometimes Beat, Kerouacian — there's a sense of experimentation under way. And in that, *True Adventures* achieves true oneness with its subject: like the Stones, Booth is full of aspiration, trying something new, unsure where it will take him. And that, in retrospect, is I think the book's great resonance for me, and its promise for any young writer: take these chances, it has continued to tell me, and some of them will pay off.

The Random House cover photo of the author, apparently taken years later, showing him neatly groomed and wearing coat and tie, made you wonder how on earth he hung out with the Stones. But a much better shot of Booth and Keith Richards at the end of the new edition shows him long-haired and modish, bandanna around his neck, perhaps backstage somewhere, looking like maybe Keith's brother. (Throughout *True Adventures* he seems to connect more readily with Keith, and, indeed, years later he published another book about only him: *Keith: Standing in the Shadows*.)

This photo is a valuable addition because it lets you see how close Booth got to the band, how much he identified with them. And by contrast, how little common ground he felt with other journalists on the Stones's trail. Take, for instance, Booth's descriptions of the Stones's press conferences and



interviews with the correspondents of various well-known media. The distance between these accomplished people and the author is fascinating. Instead of participating in these scenes, he simply observes cannily, letting the reporters' superficial questions and the Stones's sound-bite answers speak for themselves. It's all summed up by a sentence which, when he wrote it, must have given Booth great pleasure: "When the *Newsweek* talk ended and the reporter left, we all decided to have lunch together on the Strip."

At other times, his in-group status results in clear antipathy toward outsiders. He's particularly hard on Albert and David Maysles, who are also along for parts of the tour, including Altamont, filming their now-classic documentary, *Gimme Shelter*. The filmmakers' sin, it appears, is to have gained access to the inner sanctum without the requisite knowledge of the music, or long-term commitment to the enterprise. Booth is in a New York taxi with the brothers on the last day of the tour: "As we rode we talked about the Stones. David and Al seemed to know nothing about them and two months later, after their film was shot, would still be talking about Bill Watts" (a conflation of the names of Charlie Watts, the drummer, and Bill Wyman, the bass player).

Another peril of participatory journalism is exposure to a subject's vices — drugs, in the case of the Rolling Stones. Drug use was part of the ethic of the times. "Practically everybody who got near the band in those days got drug-addicted," a friend whose family was in business with them told me. Booth comments on it (and has joked that the book was so late because he had to wait for statutes of limitation to expire). And yet Booth also, in being so firmly "embedded" with the Stones, seems unaware of what he's being swal-

lowed up by — or, at any rate, unwilling to struggle against it. Booth, with Richards apparently as his source, maintains that in the early days the Stones took "no dope of any kind . . . But in 1969 things had changed. It would be impossible to endure a world that makes you work and suffer, impossible to endure history, if it weren't for the fleeting moments of ecstasy." And so we have the drugs, and the justification for them. By the seventh paragraph of the tour, Booth is taking up a roadie for B.B. King on his offer of a sniff of heroin and then describing how particularly sexy Tina Turner and the Ikettes looked when he was high, how it figured in with the work ("People talked to me but I went on writing, no one could reach me in my Poe-like drugged creative sweats.") Marijuana is omnipresent, starting on page four. In one passage, Booth, tripping on LSD, describes a policeman in a roadside café, "all dark blue, black leather, and menacing devices." The cop, on his radio, receives a report of a crime committed by a black teenage girl. "The cop said he'd be right there, his tone loaded with sex and sadism. The only way he could be intimate with a black girl was to punish her. After he left, the place still reeked with his lust, if you had taken acid."

After all these years, I finally see that drug use probably explains the book's hallucinatory opening (where else do you get, "All the little snakes are asleep" and the suicides with stakes through their hearts?), and I can see it behind some of the book's luminosity and its inscrutability. Booth makes clear that drug addiction was, indeed, one of the reasons the book took so long to complete; withdrawal, he writes, brought on epileptic seizures. But it apparently wasn't the main one. In the new afterword he lays the blame mainly on changing times, on the end of the sixties, on the rise of Reagan and yuppies and greed. He claims:

I had to become a different person from the narrator in order to tell the story. This was necessary because of the heartbreak, the disappointment, the chagrin, the regret, the remorse. We had all, Stones, fans, hangers-on, parasites, observers, been filled with optimism there in the autumn of 1969 . . . we believed that we were different, that we were somehow chosen, or anointed, for success, for love and happiness. We were wrong.

Elsewhere in the afterword, he writes that he had to overcome depression and "domestic upheaval." "So torn was I that at times I begged for death and for years tempted death almost constantly, at last throwing myself off a North Georgia mountain waterfall onto the granite boulders below, smashing my face, breaking my back."

What to make of this? Cynically, I now wonder if such a talented writer simply requires a dramatic explanation — for himself, as much as anyone — for his book being nearly fifteen years late. But a better part of me appreciates that journalism approaching this level of art might necessarily exact such a price: If you take Booth's explanation at face value, his time with the Stones becomes a kind of parable about participatory journalism. The book was a stand-out because Booth involved himself so fully not in just a band tour but in the passions of a generation. And yet, as the world changed, there was no way for that participant to write the book until he became somebody else and could look back on his experience as a thing apart, something that happened to a different person in a time long lost. Either way, the afterword brings me a bit closer to solving the question I asked my editor at Random House, those many years ago. I don't think he knew the answer, anyway. ■

*Ted Conover is the author, most recently, of Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing, and Distinguished Writer in Residence at New York University.*

## BOOK REVIEWS

## IDEAS &amp; REVIEWS



## SHADOW PLAYS

A dark time in Indonesia, seen through two complementary prisms

IN THE TIME OF MADNESS, by Richard Lloyd Parry  
Jonathan Cape. 315 pp. \$24

WARS WITHIN: THE STORY OF TEMPO, AN INDEPENDENT  
MAGAZINE IN SOEHARTO'S INDONESIA, by Janet Steele  
Equinox Publishing. 328 pp. \$16.95

BY LAWRENCE PINTAK

In 1997, as Indonesia's economy was crumbling, I moved my family from Jakarta to Bali, putting some distance between my children and the gathering storm clouds in the capital. We settled on a house in a village near the island's spiritual heart, Ubud, built by a well-known documentary-maker who had been killed in a freak accident. Just before we moved in, my wife visited a *dukun*, or traditional seer. The spirit of the land on which the house was built, the *dukun* warned, took a human life every few years. It intended to take a female life next.

For my wife, whose own bloodline extends back to Indonesia's other mystical power center, the royal *keraton* (palace) of Solo on the

island of Java, there was no question. We had two daughters; we would find another house. I did not object. I had been in Indonesia long enough to know one did not challenge the unseen forces. "There is light and there is darkness" the village headman had told me a few days before the warning. "They must always be kept in balance."

It was near there that the British journalist Richard Lloyd Parry first experienced the blurred line between light and dark, between dream and reality, that is woven through *In the Time of Madness*, his intensely personal account of covering Indonesia during the final years of President Suharto's rule. "After I had fallen asleep with the jungle in my ears, I dreamed of knives and faces," he recalls in the prologue. "Of a mobile tele-

phone that would not stop ringing and of endless conversations with a man named Colonel Mehmet." Over the next three years, the mysterious colonel would continue to haunt Parry's dreams, as the young journalist explored the dark side of Indonesia in the late 1990s as "one power was dying; another was fighting to get born."

In the tradition of the best literary journalism, *In the Time of Madness* reads like a novel, offering both a unique perspective on Indonesia's *reformasi* revolution of 1998 and an uncomfortably honest portrayal of a journalist at work. Parry writes in a voice at times reminiscent of Joseph Conrad, who also probed the archipelago's heart of darkness. At first, like most young reporters, Parry believed he wore an emotional armor that insulated him from the horror as civilization's rules began to fray: "I encountered death, but remained untouched." Headhunters eating human flesh in Borneo; mob justice in the capital; the Timor revolt. But like so many foreign correspondents before him, Parry eventually "discovered that such experience is never externalized, only absorbed, and that it builds up inside one, like a toxin."

While most journalistic accounts of the end of Suharto's three decades at the helm focus on the collapse of the economy, the corruption of the president's clan and cronies, and the political machinations of rival heirs to the political throne, Parry examines events through a much darker prism; a world of ritual, spells, and seers.

This is not just a book about mysticism or Indonesia. It is also a compelling look at the realities of life as a foreign correspondent. Journalists often walk a fine line between the roles of reporter and voyeur, willing participants in the pornography of violence. Parry is not shy about offering uncomfortable glimpses of this reality, as when he manages to buy photos proving that Dayak warriors, en-

gaged in communal violence in Borneo, had reverted to the ancient art of headhunting: "We shook hands on the deal with big awful grins on our faces. In the car, I caught myself giggling, a strange cold kind of giggling, as I fingered the envelope of prints."

As someone who has covered far too many wars, I sometimes found myself wincing at Parry's willingness to lay bare the swirl of emotion and rush of adrenaline that keeps so many reporters coming back for more. Approaching the site of a massacre, Parry realizes that "I had never before felt simultaneously such extremes of eagerness and reluctance. My body felt light, as if I might float away from the earth."

Parry also offers telling insights into the complex mix of motives that drive foreign correspondents, as when he finds himself inside Indonesia's parliament building after it was taken over by students: "Such events are flattering to those who witness them; you feel that just by being there you are courageous."

At times, Parry's forays into hyperbole and his fixation with the bloodier aspects of those years threaten to undermine an otherwise fine book. It would be easy for a reader who knows little about Indonesia to come away from it with the impression that chaos reigned throughout the late '90s. The bloodshed witnessed by Parry was certainly personally traumatic for the reporter and its victims, but most Indonesians were untouched by the pockets of violence. There was no repeat of Indonesia's so-called "Year of Living Dangerously," the 1965 convulsion of bloodshed that claimed at least a half-million lives, no military coup, no collapse of central authority, no Balkanization of the archipelago. One almost senses a faint disappointment on Parry's part that none of this came to pass.

As a glimpse into the life of a foreign correspondent, or as a non-fiction companion to Conrad's *Lord*

*Jim, In the Time of Madness* is a very good read. As a history of a period through the prism of journalism, it should be paired with another recently published book about reporters and Indonesia, *Wars Within: The Story of Tempo, an Independent Magazine in Soeharto's Indonesia*, by the media historian Janet Steele.

By his own admission, Parry — like most Western reporters — only discovered Indonesia on the eve of the revolution; *Tempo* helped to bring that revolution about. *Wars Within* should be required reading for the armies of Western media trainers currently descending on newsrooms from Morocco to Indonesia in the hope of bolstering

## There is always more going on behind the scenes than is apparent to the audience.

media freedom — as well as those who fund them. Steele, an associate professor at the School of Media and Public Affairs at George Washington University, provides a deft and highly readable account of how *Tempo* pushed the envelope under an authoritarian regime and emerged as the country's most influential news organization.

Then a Fulbright scholar in Indonesia, Steele first began studying the magazine in 1997, "while *Tempo* was still a ghost," three years after it was banned for a second time by the Suharto regime. The eternal cliché about Indonesia is that, as in the country's famous shadow puppet plays, there is always more going on behind the scenes than is apparent to the audience. *Tempo* is the journalistic embodiment of this truth. Its print edition banned, the magazine began publishing an Internet version, but only as a cover for the real journalistic product, a set of e-mailed and photocopied newsletters produced by a clandestine unit of reporters organized in a system of cells, using aliases and operating from a

location even its founder, Goenawan Mohamad, claims he did not know. The Asia Foundation provided a secure server with the most up-to-date encryption to foil government efforts to trace its output. Other aspects of the operation were funded by USAID in a don't ask, don't tell relationship.

Within weeks of Suharto's downfall, *Tempo's* publishing license had been restored. A few months later, the revived magazine was once more on the streets (by 2001 it was also producing *Koran Tempo*, now one of Indonesia's most popular newspapers). Back in the States, Steele was amazed at the alacrity with which former *Tempo* reporters quit their jobs to return to the fold.

"I had initially intended to write about *Tempo* as 'the magazine that doesn't exist,'" she recalls, "but obviously that was no longer possible." So Steele returned to Indonesia in 1999 "to examine *Tempo* as a window into the history of the New Order."

The story she produced is invaluable for anyone trying to understand the workings of the media in a controlled society. It is a world in which black-and-white gives way to shades of gray. "National news in *Tempo* became part of an elaborate process of negotiating and signaling among elites," reports Steele.

Nor did Western notions of objectivity always apply. "Being 'balanced' in a [political] system that was inherently unbalanced was not enough," Steele writes. That did not mean *Tempo* always challenged the government head-on. In fact, some critics of the magazine accused it of collaboration. That, Goenawan and his colleagues contend, was all part of the delicate balancing act in which the "hidden message" of resistance was written between the lines.

The ultimate goal of *Tempo*, as

the journalist Arief Budiman told Steele, was "to supply [its readers] with the moral courage to at least not to betray their conscience." But to do that, it needed to stay alive.

Vast amounts of government and foundation money is being spent these days on gatherings at five-star hotels in places like Barcelona and Dubai at which journalists from the West and the Muslim world engage in group therapy over their joint role in facilitating the violence of recent years. "How do we avoid making the same mistake again?" is the common theme.

Each time I am asked to speak at such events, I close by stating the obvious: a little balance goes a long way. And then I read from a definition of good journalism authored not in the newsroom of *The New York Times* or *Le Monde*, but at a news organization deep in the "third world," whose publications have a combined circulation of a few hundred thousand. A news organization that most of the audience has never heard of — *Tempo*:

Our journalism will not be one-sided, or based on the politics of

a single group. We believe that neither virtue nor the lack of virtue is the monopoly of any one side. We believe that the duty of the press is not to spread prejudice, but rather to wipe it out, not to sow the seeds of hatred, but rather to communicate mutual understanding...

Suharto is gone, retired to the modest house on a tree-lined Jakarta street where, according to confidants, he spends his days in meditation and prayer. The draconian press laws that once governed the Indonesian media have been scrapped. But that does not mean that *Tempo's* struggle — or that of Indonesian journalism — is over.

At this writing, Goenawan Mohamad's hand-picked successor as editor-in-chief, Bambang Harymurti, is appealing a one-year prison sentence on a criminal libel conviction for a story that a judge ruled was not "balanced." Goenawan himself has had his home confiscated as part of a civil libel suit by the same businessman. They are among dozens of Indonesian journalists who have been dragged into courts as legal harassment has replaced government repression.

It is a scenario being played out

in countries moving toward media independence across the developing world. And as in Indonesia, reporters in many of those countries also face a host of other challenges, from lack of training and poor salaries to threats and enticements from militant Islamists and powerful economic forces.

"Remember, the overall majority [of Indonesian journalists] were recruited trained, indoctrinated under a very effective New Order (military) regime. Many are disoriented," Aristides Katoppo, another veteran editor whose newspaper was banned in the Suharto years, said in a recent e-mail. "You know how difficult it is to unlearn old habits. Militarism or commercialism are equally seducing; for the first you bow to the bayonet, for the other you bow for the money."

Suharto is gone, but the darkness he helped to create lives on.

*The veteran journalist Lawrence Pintak is director of the Adbam Center for Electronic Journalism at The American University in Cairo. His latest book, Reflections in a Bloodshot Lens: America, Islam & the War of Ideas, is due out in January from Pluto Press.*

## DOCUMENTARIES

# WATCHING WAL-MART

Four documentaries, four perspectives

IS WAL-MART GOOD FOR AMERICA? **PBS, Frontline**

THE AGE OF WAL-MART, **CNBC**

WAL-MART: THE HIGH COST OF LOW PRICE, **Brave New Films**

WHY WAL-MART WORKS (AND WHY THAT MAKES SOME PEOPLE CRAZY) **Galloway Productions**

BY LIZA FEATHERSTONE

U ntil a couple years ago, press coverage of Wal-Mart — the nation's largest private employer, and its most powerful retailer — was fawning and sycophantic, and

largely limited to the financial pages. Often, the company was presented as an icon of business success: HOW WAL-MART KEEPS GETTING IT RIGHT was a typical headline. All that has changed. Thousands of lawsuits against the company allege serious workers' rights

violations, ranging from child labor to sex discrimination. Labor unions, church leaders, economists, state governments, and many other players have been raising questions about Wal-Mart's low wages and light benefits: Are they a helpful efficiency passed on to the consumer; inhumane and exploitive to the worker; burdensome to the taxpayer, who must foot the bill when the company's workers need supplemental Food Stamps and Medicaid? Now, the press is far more vigilant in covering the retailer's flaws and its economic impact. Stories potentially embarrassing to Wal-Mart appear just about every day. In this climate, over the past year, a flur-



ry of documentary films have appeared, two in 2004 and two more just recently, representing some of the best and worst coverage of the retailer.

In November 2004, PBS's *Frontline* aired *Is Wal-Mart Good for America?* Hedrick Smith's substantive exploration of the real-world implications of the company's "Everyday Low Prices" shows that Wal-Mart puts intense pressure on suppliers to lower labor costs, forcing many manufacturers to move production offshore. We meet a worker who used to make television sets in a plant in Ohio, which was forced overseas when Wal-Mart demanded cheaper TVs. The man is not sure where he'll find work or what will become of future generations in his small town. Without the plant, jobs are scarce, except, as Smith poignantly points out, at the local Wal-Mart, where wages and benefits aren't even half as good.

CNBC's *The Age of Wal-Mart*, which aired the same month and

won a Peabody Award, was narrated by the reporter David Faber, whose ironically affable manner will be familiar to any regular viewer of the financial cable news channel. Faber presents the company in a more favorable light, yet his report is hardly a puff piece. He gives a sense of the breathtaking logistics and technology behind Wal-Mart's success: the distribution centers the size of twenty-four football fields, and the detailed data the company collects on what products are selling, where, and why. Wal-Mart's computer geeks even track the weather. Learning, for instance, that people buy more strawberry Pop Tarts during a hurricane, the folks at Arkansas headquarters, seeing a hurricane predicted in Florida, could place a massive order for that coveted comfort food. Yet Faber doesn't shy away from the company's dark side, highlighting its many lawsuits, as well as the arrogant and fraudulent tactics Wal-Mart has used in politi-

cal battles with community activists. He makes decent use of his access to the company's CEO, Lee Scott, asking some tough questions. Noting the company's less-than-generous employee health-care plans, Faber asks Scott, "Would Sam be proud?" ("Sam" is Sam Walton, the company's legendary founder.) Faber also challenges Scott's assertion that he's unconcerned about the company's bad press, noting Wal-Mart's numerous ads asserting its praiseworthy corporate citizenship. At points during the interview Scott becomes testy; it's clear that he expected kid-glove treatment from the business network, and was disappointed.

It's been more than a year since the reports of Faber and Smith, and the public debate surrounding Wal-Mart's business practices is now even fiercer. Two major national organizations, Wal-Mart Watch and Wake Up Wal-Mart, both attempting to press the



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company toward greater social responsibility, have been successful in influencing media coverage. It is fitting, then, that this past November, two more documentaries, far more polemical in tone, emerged to sharpen the debate over Wal-Mart.

Robert Greenwald's *Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price*, strenuously argues that Wal-Mart's low-cost model is bad for America. In contrast to the PBS and CNBC documentaries, Greenwald interviews only people whose lives are directly affected by Wal-Mart's practices: former employees, small-business people, community opponents, former managers. This strategy has some limitations, yet it is also the source of the film's power.

Greenwald opens with a story about a small family-owned store in Middlefield, Ohio, H&H Hardware, which closed when Wal-Mart began breaking ground for a supercenter. The local real estate market anticipated that downtown

businesses would suffer, so the value of the land plummeted, and the family was unable to refinance its commercial mortgage. Wal-Mart — along with conservative commentators sympathetic to the company — has relentlessly attacked this part of the film, correctly pointing out that the store closed three months before the Middlefield Wal-Mart opened, and that a new hardware store has reopened in the same spot and is thriving. The film doesn't actually say that the store folded because of direct competition with Wal-Mart. It's clear, however, that H&H is a flawed example, and that's unfortunate, because no one — not even Wal-Mart — disputes Greenwald's larger point that when Wal-Mart comes to town, small businesses are often forced to close their doors. Kenneth Stone, an Iowa State University economist, has extensively documented this phenomenon. Yet the segment also suffers from a lack of attention to this broader picture; Green-

wald doesn't ask why we should care about small businesses being crushed by Wal-Mart. Of course it's disappointing for the entrepreneurs and their families, but does it affect life in the region in any significant way? We know, for example, that when small businesses suffer, the local newspaper is often hurt as well, for the steep loss in advertising dollars is far from offset by Wal-Mart, which does little print promotion. What do small businesses offer a community that big businesses can't, and vice versa? Greenwald doesn't say, and here exclusive reliance on personal stories seems to hinder an exploration of important issues.

At other points, however, Greenwald's focus on individuals works magnificently. Interviews with former and current employees — who describe sex discrimination and many other abuses — are powerful. The former managers in the film are riveting; some describe practices they were pres-

## Director School of Media and Public Affairs

THE GEORGE  
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The School of Media and Public Affairs (SMPA) of The George Washington University invites nominations and applications for the position of Director of the School. The Director will report to the Dean of the Columbian College of Arts and Sciences and will hold the Airlie Chair of Media and Public Affairs in the School, a tenured position at the rank of Professor. The new Director should be a recognized authority in the field of media and public affairs who will provide vision for SMPA, add to its strength and visibility in Washington, the nation, and the world, and lead the School energetically into the future.

SMPA reflects the integration of two traditions: (1) high-level research and writing about media and public affairs and (2) intense practical training that takes full advantage of its location in the heart of the nation's capital. The successful candidate will have a distinguished career that reflects a deep understanding of and contribution to these two traditions. The Director will occupy an endowed chair; hence the successful candidate should demonstrate a commitment to scholarship, as reflected by a record of writing, and to the importance of teaching. Because the Director of SMPA is a leadership position that seeks to capitalize on accomplishments in media and public affairs generally, a candidate need not possess a PhD nor hold a teaching position at present. Such credentials would enhance an individual's candidacy but are not essential.

The incoming Director is expected to pursue the following goals: set high standards for teaching and scholarship, especially with respect to tenure and promotion; serve as chief administrator of a School with approximately twenty full-time faculty members, B.A. and M.A. degree programs, and state-of-the-art facilities; represent the School both within the University and to the world of media and public affairs; work collaboratively with University departments and external organizations; and actively pursue foundation and other sources of external support. Thus the successful candidate should also have

experience leading a large academic or professional unit, managing budgets, and speaking in public and through the news media. Applicants from a range of backgrounds are invited to apply.

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Applicants must provide a statement describing why they are interested in the position, the special experiences and credentials they bring to the job, the goals they would pursue for the School, and the focus of their own writing interests. A curriculum vitae and the names and contact information of at least three references must also be provided.

Review of the applications will begin on November 23, 2005 and continue until the position is filled.

Nominations, applications, and inquiries should be sent to:

Steven V. Roberts, Chair  
Search Committee for Director of the School of Media and Public Affairs  
c/o Office of the Dean  
Columbian College of Arts and Sciences  
212 Phillips Hall  
The George Washington University  
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sured into (including falsifying time cards to cheat employees of overtime pay), of which they are now deeply ashamed. The film's biggest surprise — especially in contrast to Smith's *Frontline* documentary, in which the Chinese exist only as a backdrop, an anonymous force stealing American jobs — is Greenwald's intimate, humanizing segment on a young couple who work in a factory in China making products for Wal-Mart, under harsh conditions. In an eloquent misconception — illustrating the vast distance between producers and consumers — a Chinese worker imagines that Wal-Mart shoppers in the United States must be very rich.

Ron Galloway's *Why Wal-Mart Works (And Why That Drives Some People Crazy)* is by far the most amateurish of these efforts, as well as the most ideologically extreme. It is hard to believe that anyone who was not being paid by Wal-Mart would make this lengthy infomercial, but Galloway has repeatedly said that he took no money from the company. In this film, analysis of Wal-Mart — and of the hostility to the company — is delivered only by conservative free-market zealots. The only Wal-Mart critics in the film are inarticulate young people who don't have much knowledge of the company's practices. Some are stereotypical hippies who wouldn't think highly of any large business. Elsewhere, Galloway's film verges on dishonesty, as when he dismisses talk of Wal-Mart's plan to cut down on "unhealthy" employees, suggesting that it's unfounded gossip, when in fact the proposal to save on healthcare costs by "dissuad[ing] unhealthy people from coming to work at Wal-Mart" was earnestly discussed in an internal company memo.

The two workers Galloway chooses to profile — a ninety-year-old retired nurse and a former drug addict — are remarkably unrepresentative of the nation's working population. The re-




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### The University of Michigan Department of Communication Studies

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The Department of Communication Studies at the University of Michigan seeks nominations and applications for the Howard R. Marsh Visiting Professorship in Journalism. The Howard R. Marsh Endowment provides funds for a one-semester or one-academic year visit from either a distinguished academic scholar who studies journalism and news media or an eminent professional journalist. The individual selected for this appointment will contribute to the education of students in the Department and College who are studying long-range factors affecting the ability of the news media to perform their functions in a democratic society.

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Applicants for the Howard R. Marsh Visiting Professorship should send a vita, evidence of teaching excellence, and three letters of recommendation to: *Marsh Professor Search / Department of Communication Studies / 105 South State Street, 2020 Frieze Building / The University of Michigan / Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1285*

Questions should be sent to: [cs-position@umich.edu](mailto:cs-position@umich.edu).

Review of nominations and applications for single-term or academic year appointment that would start in the Fall of 2006 will begin immediately and continue until the position is filled.

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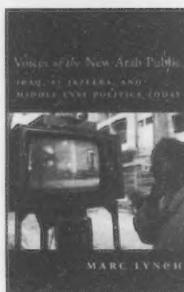
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**Deadline: April 14, 2006**Inquiries to Ted Mathys, ACG Program Coordinator: [tmathys@acgusa.org](mailto:tmathys@acgusa.org)

tiree came to work at Wal-Mart because she still had plenty of energy and needed something to do — not because she needed money or health benefits. The recovered drug addict, who had no work history when Wal-Mart hired her, is tearfully grateful to the company for giving her a chance. Galloway's choice to emphasize their experiences over any others unintentionally raises a question: Shouldn't we be worried when the nation's largest private employer provides jobs that work well only for people with few needs and low expectations?

All these documentaries add to the debate, but reporting on the company can go further. Clearly, Wal-Mart is not merely a *source* of problems — it is a symptom of broader problems. In Greenwald's documentary — and to a more subtle extent, *Frontline's* — Wal-Mart is a threat to everything rightfully and authentically American. For Ron Galloway, it represents what's greatest about America. Neither is quite true: Wal-Mart has emerged from the contradictions and paradoxes of American culture. We have created Wal-Mart, rather than the other way around. David Faber is right when he declares, at the end of *The Age of Wal-Mart*: "Wal-Mart is a near-perfect example of capitalism, which itself can bring both good and bad." This seems more promising as a point of departure than a conclusion; perhaps we will begin to see more coverage of the company as a window on the intensely marketized nature of contemporary life in the United States, rather than as an isolated example of corporate evil-doing. ■

*Liza Featherstone is the author of Selling Women Short: The Landmark Battle for Workers' Rights at Wal-Mart (Basic Books), which was recently released in paperback. She shared research with Robert Greenwald's producers — and vice versa — and has been a featured speaker at several screenings of his Wal-Mart film.*



## BOOK REPORTS

### IDEAS & REVIEWS

BY JAMES BOYLAN

NO ORDINARY JOE:  
A LIFE OF JOSEPH PULITZER III  
by Daniel W. Pfaff  
University of Missouri Press  
359 pp. \$34.95

Fourteen years ago, Daniel W. Pfaff, now a professor emeritus at Penn State University, completed an exhaustive biography of Joseph Pulitzer II (1885-1955), the son whom the first Joseph Pulitzer left in charge of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* when he died in 1911. This similarly detailed biography of the third Joseph Pulitzer (1913-1993), son of Joseph II, also centers on the *Post-Dispatch*. Had he been born into another family, Joe (as Pfaff calls him) might have pursued his interest in art as a profession rather than a sideline; as it was, he shouldered the duties of his heritage, learned how to be a journalist and an executive, and guided the newspaper through three difficult decades with skill, intelligence, and adherence to the liberal editorial policies set by his grandfather. Pfaff extends the scope of this study to make it also a history of the newspaper itself over the last fifty years — the shifts in newsroom and stockholder power, the order of succession, the struggle to cope with new times and new competition. It is also to a degree a biography of Joe's half-brother, Michael Pulitzer, who became Joe's successor in 1986. Although Pfaff worked with the almost universal cooperation of the family, he does not whitewash; for example, he describes candidly Michael Pulitzer's successful struggle to avoid alcoholism. Pfaff must have been startled by the surprise ending as he finished his book. He was barely able to sandwich in the sale of Pulitzer Inc., including the *Post-*



*Dispatch*, to Lee Enterprises of Davenport, Iowa, on January 30, 2005. Thus, the end of the dynasty.

INVESTIGATED REPORTING:  
MUCKRAKERS, REGULATORS,  
AND THE STRUGGLE OVER  
TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY  
by Chad Raphael  
University of Illinois Press  
304 pp. \$45

For its substance, *Investigated Reporting* reaches back more than three decades to the age of the full-scale, wide-ranging network documentary — *The Selling of the Pentagon*, *Hunger in America*, *Harvest of Shame*, *The Tunnel*, *Banks and the Poor*, and more. Besides providing a rich account of the controversies that sprang up after each broadcast, Raphael, a communication scholar at Santa Clara University, provides a complex, paradoxical analysis. Rather than seeing television muckraking in the classic model of journalists uncovering problems, he finds a system in which journalism cooperated with advocacy groups and allied officials who used the

documentaries to air their concerns. Inevitably, opposing interest groups and officials attacked the journalists. The stabilizing factor in this mix was a system of government regulation that served journalism as much as a defense as an obstacle. Such a terse summary scarcely does justice to Raphael's argument, but suffice it to say that he believes that the regulatory balance of the 1960s and 1970s, in which television muckraking survived and persisted, has been replaced by a system of private corporate controls that rarely permit documentaries to rise above the trivial.

THE SECRET HISTORIES:  
HIDDEN TRUTHS THAT  
CHALLENGED THE PAST  
AND CHANGED THE WORLD  
edited by John S. Friedman  
Picador. 529 pp. \$16 paperback

Seeking to define his heterogeneous anthology, John S. Friedman, journalist and filmmaker, writes: "Secret histories usually reveal an unknown element of a completed event. Investigative journalism usually focuses on ongoing events. Obviously they can overlap." And they do in this collection. Friedman has found disturbing accounts of much of the underside of the twentieth century, many of them centered on abuses of human rights — IBM's role in Germany's roundup of Jews, the American government's plutonium experiments on unwitting subjects, the terrorist activities of the Pinochet government in Chile. And many more, some familiar, some all but forgotten. Friedman cautions that secret histories are not always accurate: For example, he declines to vouch for all of Anthony Summers's 1993 exposé of J. Edgar Hoover's secret life, but uses an excerpt nonetheless.

## S C E N E

GETTY IMAGES/SETH WENG



## Talkin' 'Bout a Revolution

BY RUSS BAKER

**T**imes have certainly changed when bloggers who rail about mainstream journalism can rent part of the Rainbow Room, atop Manhattan's GE building — a temple of the media establishment — to announce the latest iteration of the revolution.

As something of a hybrid between old and new media myself, I was intrigued by what I'd heard about Pajamas Media, a for-profit company that gathered some seventy bloggers onto its megasite and raised \$3.5 million as it prepared to elevate "citizen journalism" and "redefine journalism in the 21st Century and beyond." So I donned my best suit and headed to Rockefeller Center on November 16.

One cofounder of the Los Angeles-based venture is Roger Simon, a screenwriter, mystery novelist, and self-described social liberal who supported the war in Iraq. The other is Charles Johnson, a professional guitarist who runs the conservative Web site [www.littlegreenfootballs.com](http://www.littlegreenfootballs.com), and who led the charge against CBS over the flawed Bush National Guard story. The eclectic Pajamas Media participant list includes brothers from Baghdad, Australians, and aficionados of technology, fashion, and vodka. But the thrust is clearly on American politics, and PM promises "bottom-up" journalism and commentary "by citizens using their observations and knowledge, informed by a desire to speak honestly."

A curious example soon came in the person of the luncheon keynoter, one Judith Miller. She offered five commandments for bloggers who want admission to the mainstream media, including being honest about

one's agenda and admitting when one makes mistakes. "If you're wrong," she said, "keep going till you get it right."

Next came a video hookup featuring Senator John Cornyn, a Texas Republican and close ally of President Bush, who proceeded to slam traditional journalism for its "partisanship," citing Dan Rather as exhibit A, and declaring that he reads blogs "for the truth."

Reading the blogger biographies, I saw that, despite claims to bipartisanship — and a few token liberals — there was a whiff of reaction. One participant wrote the book *The Death of Right and Wrong: Exposing the Left's Assault on Our Culture and Values*. The squibs were full of Fox News, *National Review Online*, *Washington Times*, *The Weekly Standard*, and such.

Of course, Pajamas is a fledgling operation that deserves the benefit of the doubt. Simon insists that he is interested in a genuine exchange of ideas, and *The Nation's* David Corn — one of those token liberals — told me that he "signed up assuming good faith." He also said he is "watching with a careful eye."

But what troubled my old-media soul isn't a matter of left-right. It's that I heard nothing about PM's commitment to reporting or to intellectual honesty — the two things most lacking in the blogworld. The avalanche of unearned opinion that is produced each day by bloggers needs no leg up, but honest journalism sure does. Watch with a careful eye, indeed. **CJR**

*Russ Baker is a contributing editor to CJR.*

# The Lower case



**THIS 175-FOOT-TALL**, 1,600-year-old Buddha statue in Bamyan, about 90 miles west of the Afghan capital of Kabul, was dynamited by Taliban militants in March 2001.

*San Mateo (Calif.) County Times* 8/13/05

**Flag event to honor Sept. 11, war dead will take a break**

*The Oregonian* 9/10/05

**Poll finds doubts about Bush rising**

*Iowa City Press-Citizen* 11/4/05

**Motorist drowns fleeing troopers**

*Austin-American Statesman* 7/16/05

**Girl competes with hogs at fair**

*The (Kinston, N.C.) Free Press* 10/12/05

**Mom accused of killing child ineligible for death**

*The Dallas Morning News* 10/9/05

**A new face will fill shoes of 25-year pastor**

*Houston Chronicle* 10/29/05

## OBITUARIES

**Some schools trying to become pesticide-free environments**

*The Arizona Republic* 7/28/05

Weighing over 1,800 pounds, which may be a record, Trgina shot the animal in Alaska about two weeks ago.

*(Mt. Pleasant, Mich.) Morning Sun* 9/23/05

**Bears:** Hunter hired to kill animal linked to many break-ins

*The Sacramento Bee* 10/27/05

**Turkey Conducts Bird Flu Investigation**

*ABC News (Online)* 10/14/05



A water taxi departs from a tanker recently anchored in Port Angeles, one of the busiest tanker stop-overs on the West coast. It is also a place where crew members can get intoxicated without worrying about going through official checkpoints.

## Breaking the corporate blockade to get the real story on oil tankers.

After a mystery oil spill in Puget Sound, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer investigated how the oil-safety reforms instituted after the Exxon Valdez spill were working—and found that the safety net is fraying dangerously.

Investigative reporter Eric Nalder followed the trail of evidence to ConocoPhillips, the third-largest oil company in the United States. The company tried to thwart his efforts by issuing a gag order to its employees, but thanks to a whistleblower's courage and Nalder's perseverance, the P-I found a pattern of misconduct and dangerous behavior aboard oil tankers owned by Polar Tankers, a ConocoPhillips subsidiary.

Those tankers regularly carry millions of gallons of oil from Alaska to Pacific ports, and so the story was of vital interest to Seattle and the entire Puget Sound area. Through interviews and the



Eric Nalder, Reporter

discovery of internal company documents, Nalder reported the coverup of an oil spill at sea, an unreported explosion, reports of alcohol use on tankers and harassment of crew members who reported problems. He found evidence that ConocoPhillips influenced a Washington study that proposed a reduction in tanker tug escorts. Nalder also detailed the checkered career of the Polar Tankers ship suspected by the Coast Guard of causing the mystery spill.

To read the series, "The Human Factor: Why Another Exxon Valdez Could Happen," visit the Web site at [seattlepi.nwsources.com/specials/oiltankers/](http://seattlepi.nwsources.com/specials/oiltankers/)

The series generated a strong response, including supportive letters from mariners and the Washington Legislature's creation of a new oil spill advisory council. By overcoming obstacles to find the truth, our journalists help protect their local communities and ensure that Hearst Newspapers deliver excellence every day.



  
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